

Hafa Adai!

22nd Legislature inauguration this Monday. **PAGE 2**

Find out if you qualify for a disaster loan, grant with NMHC. **PAGE 3**

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2nd dose injections start Saturday

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. will start administering this Saturday, Jan. 9, the second doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to those who have already had their first dose.

CHCC strongly advises those who have already received their first dose not to miss their second dose appointment. "It is very important that you make your appointment and receive the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Our effort is to achieve community-wide herd immunity and, as researchers

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AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, Jan 5, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,344	13	7,357
Recovered	7,089	43	7,132
Active	89	13	102
Deaths	123	0	123
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			103,202

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	125	0	125
Traced via Travel Screening	99	0	99
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			22,633*
Days since last community transmission			140

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:

- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor



THE MAN ON THE HILL

Zhang Shan Guo, 43, has been standing on the curb in front of the CNMI Governor's Office parking lot on Capital Hill for several days now. Zhang, who describes himself as a Chinese refugee, says he has no work, no food, no shelter, and no money to buy a plane ticket so he could go home, and is asking for help to scrape together the funds he needs so he can leave (thanks to the help of Google Translate). He has been going to the same spot for seven days now and stays until it gets dark every single day and relies on the compassion of passing motorists who give him food, water, and some cash. A few minutes after the photo was taken, a couple in their car stopped to give Zhang some food and water, explaining that they have been seeing him every morning whenever they pass by and noticed that he would stand there all day.

NEIL FAMA

Yumul undecided whether to align with Dems

» In serving the 22nd Legislature, lawmaker wants to see sports in villages again

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (R-Saipan) said yesterday that he has not decided yet whether to align with the Democratic

Party in the coming 22nd House of the Representatives and that "everything is up in the air."

"Right now, we're looking at



Yumul

[all] options. Obviously, everyone is looking at me as the person, that, you know, might switch or align, if that's what they call it," said Yumul in an interview.

See YUMUL on Page 4

No decision in probe on Torres' expenses

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A special committee the House of Representatives created to

review the expenditures of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres is at an impasse, having been unable to reach a decision.

Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (R-

Saipan), who chairs the Special Committee on Fiscal Review of Executive Expenditures, said he'd rather be relieved of this duty and have all materials they collated be turned over to the Office of

the Public Auditor, which has the constitutional authority to investigate fraud.

In a report dated Dec. 30, 2020, Yumul said the committee was unable to come to See EXPENSES on Page 4

OAG opposes release of man who killed infant

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General is opposing the release of a man who was convicted of killing an infant back in 2000.

In a memorandum addressed to Board of Parole director Ramon Camacho, OAG Chief Prosecutor John Bradley is opposing the grant of parole to Reynaldo Atrero Manila, 59, because

See OAG on Page 4

INSIDE



BUSINESS

Saipan is an exporter of aloha shirts, lava-lavas, and Hawaiian dresses, thanks to Sea Shell Pink.

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NATION

President-elect Joe Biden tells Georgia Democrats they had the power to "chart the course."

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WORLD

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Monday a new national lockdown for England.

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Local



22nd Legislature inauguration this Monday

Members of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation pose for a group photo after their *sine die* or final session at the House chamber in Capital Hill yesterday morning. The full House will have their *sine die* session today, Wednesday, while the Senate will have it this Friday.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

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REPORTER

The 22nd CNMI Legislature will be inaugurated this Monday, Jan. 11, in an invitation-only event that will be closed to much of the public in compliance with public health guidelines, but will be aired live on TV and streamed live over Facebook.

This developed as the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation, chaired by Rep. John

» **Inauguration closed to public but televised live, streamed on FB**
» **House sine die session today, Wednesday, Senate this Friday**

Paul Sablan (R-Saipan), held a *sine die* or final session at the House chamber on Capitol Hill to close out the del-
See LEGISLATURE on Next Page

Turkish workers to dismiss suit vs contractor

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The group of H-2B workers from Turkey who is suing Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC and its contractor, IDS Development Management & Consultancy, is withdrawing its lawsuit against the contractor.

Richard Miller, who represents Turkish workers Özcan Genç, Hasan Gökçe, and Süleyman Köş in their lawsuit against IPI and IDS Development Management & Consultancy told the court that his clients will move to dismiss the lawsuit against IDS, which is registered in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Miller

The lawyer said he will file a new Rule 23 motion for class action certification and will file a motion for default judgement.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona scheduled the hearing for the motion for Jan. 14 at 9am.

In addition, Manglona also granted the petition for a preliminary Fair Labor Standards Act certification of collective action filed by workers against IPI and its parent company, IPI Holdings, Ltd.

At a Dec. 30 hearing, Manglona also granted the

plaintiffs' withdrawal of the issuance of notice to all potential members.

Miller also submitted to the court 29 names, including the three workers, who have consented to opt-in to the collective action. The 26 others are Ahmet Kizmaz, Ahmet Kucukhurman, Ali Cakir, Ali Gunes, Deniz Ozturk, Ebubekir Gul, Ertan Gul, Fuat Mert Oztuna, Gokhan Gunes, Idris Kocamaz, Kadir Mucur, Mehmet Baris Derintas, Mehmet Cercibasi, Mehmet Karakaya, Muharrem Basaran, Mukremin Cobanpinari, Mustafa Dogan, Mustafa Orcun, Omer Donmez, Osman Gunes, Osman Yentur, Rana-zan Tekteb, Sakin Polat, Sezai Kaya, and Tuncay Yarbasi.

The court previously granted the workers' request for an entry of default after IPI failed to file a response or defend itself within the time permitted by court rules in their lawsuit, even though IPI was served with the summons and complaint by the workers on Nov. 23, 2020.

According to the suit, the workers were promised above minimum wage, substantial overtime pay, and roundtrip tickets and they never received them.

They said IPI also promised them that it would hire a cook who could prepare the kind of food suited for them.



LOCAL Staycation PACKAGE

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Find out if you qualify for a disaster loan, grant with NMHC

By JUSTINE NAUTA

justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

People in the CNMI whose homes were either destroyed or damaged by previous typhoons and want to rebuild or fix their homes can now check with the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. to find out if they qualify for disaster assistance via a loan. If their income is low enough, that loan will be converted into an outright grant that they won't have to pay.

It was learned that, starting last Jan. 4, 2021, NMHC began accepting prequalification applications for three programs under the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery Housing programs—the Homebuyer Program, the New Construction Program, and the Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program. Loan prequalification applications are being accepted on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

NMHC executive director Jesse Palacios is encouraging the community to apply.

On Saipan, NMHC is taking applications at its central

office in Garapan. On Tinian, applications are being accepted at the Northern Marianas College campus, and on Rota at the Sinapalo Youth Center, from 8am to 3pm, Monday through Friday. Applicants should bring an identification card (driver's license, Mayor of Saipan ID, passport (for applicants only), and birth certificate for everyone in the household, a copy of six recent check stubs for all adult household members, social security card, and retirement income statements (if applicable), and a copy of the certification of title, deed, or residential homestead permit.

According to Palacios, there is approximately \$77 million available for people who want to build homes or fix the damage caused by typhoons. He clarified, though, that in order to avail of the funds, one of the requirements for those who just want to fix their homes is for applicants to have lived in the CNMI three years prior to the damage occurring on their home. For those who want to avail of funds to build a house, they should

have lived in the CNMI for at least 10 years.

Palacios added that they prefer that applicants apply at the central office so that he and his team can give on-the-spot approval for the prequalification applications. Once found eligible, that's when NMHC will give eligible applicants the actual application form with other requirements. NMHC has set up a canopy outside their office in Garapan with CBDG-DR loan specialists who are assigned to help assist interested applicants for the housing program.

For those who can't go in-person, NMHC has the prequalification application on their website, www.nmh-cgov.net, but Palacios still encourages people to go in-person so that NMHC can help them fill the application.

Palacios stated that NMHC is targeting the elderly and people with disabilities. "We know that they are the ones who need most of the assistance," said Palacios.

He stated that the loans will be income-based. The lower the applicants' income is, the lower would be the

amount that they would have to pay back. He added that all income must be accounted for when calculating a family's annual income, including Supplemental Security Income, working income, retirement income, etc.

For example, for a family of two, if they are making \$11,600 annually together, and they get approved for the loan, they won't have to pay back the amount and it will be considered a grant, ac-

cording to Palacios.

"If you are making \$11,600 or below, then you get a grant. You don't have to pay back anything that is used to either, if you're going to buy a house because you don't have one, or you have one and the typhoon damaged it. You don't have to pay anything because you fall under this income bracket (\$11,600/annually). This is what HUD considers extremely low income," said

Palacios. HUD is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Palacios stated that the applicant must be the owner of the home. People who are turning in applications for their relatives must have a notarized letter saying that they are authorized to handle all requirements for the CBDG-DR applications.

NMHC has so far seen over 10 applicants for the CBDG-DR prequalification.

LEGISLATURE

From Page 2

egation yesterday morning. *Sine die* means an indefinite adjournment, without a scheduled resumption.

The full House of Representatives will have its *sine die* session today, Wednesday, at the House chamber at 10am, while the full Senate's will be held this Friday, at 10am at the Senate chamber.

This Monday's inaugural event for the 22nd CNMI Legislature will be televised live on Docomo Cable, Channel 23 and will be streamlined live on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/cnmilegislation> in their respective chambers, according to the Legislative Bureau.

The inauguration at the House will be at 10am, while the Senate's will be at 11am.

These events are happening amid suspense at the House as the question of which bloc will be the majority is still as toss-up between the traditionally dominant Republican Party and a resurgent Democratic Party.

As of yesterday, it's still not clear whether Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, who is a member of the Republican Party, is going to align himself with the Democratic

Party, as is being rumored. This move will likely make the Democrats the new majority.

At the last Nov. 3 general elections for the House race, eight Democrats, nine Republicans, and three independent candidates won.

Independent Reps. Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagoomez (Saipan) and Donald Manalang Manglona (Rota) have already aligned with the Democrats, giving the Democrats 10 votes. Independent Rep. Joseph Flores (Saipan) is aligned with the Republicans, giving the Republicans 10 votes. This means that any member of both parties who aligns with the other party will break the tie for the majority.

If the Democrats become the new majority, Villagoomez will likely be the House speaker. If the Republicans remain the majority, Speaker Blas Jonathan T. Attao could keep his seat if he is interested, *Saipan Tribune* learned from a source.

Another big question is if former representative Edwin K. Propst, who ran as a Democrat, will serve again as House Precinct 1 representative. As of yesterday, he was still silent about his plans, although he indicated his intent to serve again based on his recent social media posts.

At the Senate, it's Tinian's turn for the presidency, so

Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) is expected to be the new Senate president.

At yesterday's SNILD's last session, minority floor leader Rep. Christina Sablan (D-Saipan) said that last year was a most difficult year, but she's proud and grateful for the work that they were able to do together to address priority needs in the municipality, "especially the supplemental funds. We were able to identify [funds] for our educational institutions, which are still in disaster recovery." Sablan reiterated her commitment to continue supporting Saipan and Northern Islands mayors in the 22nd Legislature.

"Thank you, colleagues. I truly enjoyed working with all of you. And, I look forward to continuing to collaborate with you, whether you are in the 22nd Legislature or as concerned and active members of our community," Sablan said.

Attao thanked the SNILD leadership and the members for the work they did during these tough times, having appropriated funding to so many different entities to assist them. "And in these very tough times, the delegation...made sure that all the other entities on Saipan and Northern Islands are taken care of so they can provide for our community," Attao said.

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Hazardous conditions to persist

The National Weather Service expects hazardous weather conditions to persist until tonight and inexperienced mariners are advised to avoid operating vessels in these hazardous conditions.

NWS reports that conditions will be hazardous to small craft with gusty wind making navigation difficult and large waves can capsize small crafts.

Winds have subsided between 10 and 20 knots with occasional gusts to 25 knots still expected and will gradually subside this evening.

NWS strongly advises inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels to avoid navigating in hazardous conditions until the small craft advisory has been lifted. **(Kimberly A. Bautista)**

NMTI reopens for ongoing students

The Northern Marianas Trades Institute is celebrating its much anticipated return to offering trades courses in the CNMI.

The school closed its doors to students back in April 2020 as a direct

result of the increased spread of COVID-19 throughout the globe. The 103 students directly affected by the closure are now slowly finding their footing as they resume the rest of their studies, which officially

started Jan. 4, 2021.

The reopening prior to the full transition over to becoming the Northern Marianas Technical Institute is needed as it remains an open financial obligation on its books and such debts cannot be transferred over to the new entity, according to Agnes McPhetres, NMTI chief executive officer.

"The private sector has been and continues to be our biggest catalyst as they have not only helped in the overall creation of the programs we offer, but they have actively engaged the process by offering their professional staff at times as instructors; for this we are truly grateful," added McPhetres.

Dante Yumul, director of Instruction said, "As we continue to strive

for growth, we see the continued need to partner with the private sector as students need the hands-on experience in order to be successful at their career endeavors."

NMTI hopes the soft reopening stirs more interest and result in an increased number of registrants and, in turn, highlight NMTI's need for sustained funding. "It is our hope that, our funding stream will once again be re-opened so that we may serve a greater number of residents," said an NMTI statement.

"Only we residents can navigate our islands on the right course... and I feel our team here at NMTI is equipped to do just that. We are grateful to those that have supported us and thank them for their continued patronage as we once again open our doors to our constituents," Yumul further stated. **(PR)**



The Northern Marianas Trades Institute is celebrating its much anticipated return to offering trades courses in the CNMI. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

EXPENSES

From Page 1

a single decision, despite having subpoenaed or compelled the testimony of several witnesses and received about 1,600 pages of material and hours' worth of testimonies.

In the report that was addressed to House Speaker Jonathan Blas T. Attao (R-Saipan), Yumul said he understands that the public has an interest in the accountability and protection of public funds, which is why he instead strongly recommends that he be relieved of his duties and that the documents, testimonies, and records that they gathered be transmitted to the Office of the Public Auditor.

The lawmaker said OPA is the constitutional body entrusted with the audit of the receipt, possession, and disbursement of public funds.

"I, as chairman and given the nature of the matter at hand, find that it would be at risk of acting without any legal authority and in violation of House rules if it proceeded with its investigation," said Yumul.

Attao created the special committee last July 6 to review documents and materials relative to the expenditures of the Executive Branch due to allegations of public corruption and abuse of public funds.

Rep. Lorenzo I. Deleon Guerrero (R-Saipan) is the special committee's vice chairman and the members are Reps. John Paul P. Sablan (R-Saipan), Luis John DLG Castro (Ind-Saipan), Christina M. Sablan (D-Saipan), Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan), and then-representative Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan). Attao also appointed two alternate members: Reps. Ivan A. Blanco (R-Saipan) and Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero (R-Saipan).

Yumul said the special committee found that there was simply too much material and too little time and resources to conduct an adequate and thorough investigation.

The committee conducted its first public meeting last July 13.

Among those who were asked to provide certain documents were Bureau of Motor Vehicle director Juana Leon Guerrero, Department of Lands and Natural Resources Secretary Anthony Benavente, Homeland Security and Emergency Management special assistant Gerald Deleon Guerrero, Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Priscilla Iakopo, Northern Islands Mayor Vicente Santos, Department of Public Safety Commissioner Robert Guerrero, and Commonwealth Casino Commission chair Edward C. Deleon Guerrero.

Last July 30, the special committee

held a public hearing.

The committee decided, with seven members voting "yes" and one member absent, to issue a subpoena for the following items: all records related to first-class, business-class, or any other premium-class travel expenses paid by the government for Torres, his wife Diann, from Oct. 1, 2014 to Dec. 10, 2019.

The other items sought were any records showing credit card or bank information submitted by Torres or his designee for reimbursement by the government between Oct. 1, 2014 and Dec. 10, 2019.

Also sought were records related to expenses paid by the government for executive security, protective, or chauffeur services for Torres and his wife, from Oct. 1, 2014 to Dec. 10, 2019, and all records related to housing or utilities expenses paid by the government for Torres from Oct. 1, 2014 to Dec. 10, 2019.

The committee also sought documents from special assistant for administration Mathilda A. Rosario, Triple B Forwarders station manager Paul Manglona, and Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC chief executive officer Donald Browne, and subpoenaed Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig, Finance Administrative Services director Margaret Bertha C. Torres, and legal counsel to the governor Gilbert Birnbrich.

ed under Phase 1B, which includes government employees, education employees, telecommunications employees, and COVID-19 contractors.

"As a result of an amazing turnout, we have reached the cap of our vaccination openings for this week, ahead of schedule," said the CHCC statement.

For this week, the COVID-19 vaccination plan will focus on people who are bedridden or homebound due to health conditions. The Office of Aging is putting together this list.

Vaccinations for the first dose under Phase 1A will still continue, and once they've reached a set portion of vaccinated individuals in group 1A,

that's when they will open vaccination distribution to group 1B again.

CHCC assured that it will continue to monitor the vaccination distribution numbers, and in order to plan for each phase, they will need to monitor each preceding phase.

In other news, the State of Hawaii has identified CHCC Laboratory as a Trusted Testing Partner for its Pre-Travel Testing Program. Under that program, travelers from the CNMI who are able to provide a state-approved COVID-19 negative test result within 72 hours from the final leg of departure will be able to bypass Hawaii's mandatory quarantine order, said CHCC.

YUMUL

From Page 1

There have been persistent talks that Yumul will align himself with the Democratic Party, a move that will likely make the Democrats the new majority in the House.

He said right now he's looking at what's best and how the dynamics of the next Legislature will be and how to serve the CNMI to its greatest potential.

"I haven't decided yet. Obviously, there was a lot of offers being made by both sides," said Yumul, adding that he works well with both Republican and Democratic parties.

When asked when he is going to make a final decision, Yumul said that, based on his past experience with the 19th Legislature, it went all the way to the 11th hour or early morning of the inauguration day when they found out how the leadership was formed.

He said it depends on the two leaders who are interested in becoming House speakers.

"So that's something we're look-

ing at now," said Yumul, stressing that he's not interested in becoming a speaker.

He said there's somewhere they differ in ideals and that's something that he is going to look and see what the formulation of the next House leadership and he will go from there.

"I don't want to see a Legislature that's going to go to an impasse or a split, you know that's something that will not benefit anyone. There will always be fighting on both sides. So we'll see what will happen," the lawmaker said.

Yumul has been serving as Precinct 3 representative since the 18th Legislature.

In the 22nd Legislature, Yumul said his priority is seeing the revival of Little League games, that it's been two years since people haven't seen any activities from Little League.

"And so I like to see that happen this time. Two years of not seeing sports in the villages is quite a long time. So we'll be focused on that. This is bringing back the fields back up to date so that kids can start playing and hopefully get to play abroad," Yumul said.

OAG

From Page 1

of the seriousness of the crime.

"Manila took the life of an infant and has never accepted responsibility for his actions. He should not be released into the CNMI community. Should parole be granted, the Parole Board should condition it upon confirmation that travel documents exist and that Manila will be deported," Bradley said.

He argues that Manila does not accept responsibility for his crime and continues to deny that he caused the death of the child.

"He says he is a 'victim of justice.' He still claims that the baby simply fell, which was not consistent with the medical evidence. The infant had bleeding in the brain and retinal hemorrhaging, consistent with Shaken Baby Syndrome," Bradley said.

In addition, Bradley says that the infant's mother who has since passed away, strongly opposes early release for Manila.

"The family continues to feel the loss of the young child. The wound to

the family is deep and slow to heal," he said.

Back in 2000, Manila was convicted of second-degree murder and child abuse and was sentenced to 60 years confinement. He is eligible for parole because he has already served one-third of his sentence.

Following a jury trial, Manila was convicted of causing the death of the 6-month-old female infant by striking and shaking her violently. During trial, he lied about the circumstances of the injury and did not seek medical care upon seeing that she was severely injured. She died in the hospital days later.

Manila previously sought clemency from the governor, which was denied. The OAG says that Manila has repeatedly attempted to use various medical conditions to seek sympathy.

Manila has a detainer for deportation to the Philippines. However, deportation is unlikely to happen because, one, there is no confirmation that Manila has sufficient travel documents to confirm deportation, and, second, there is no confirmation that the Philippines is currently accepting deportees.

DOSE

From Page 1

of the vaccine have determined, the level of protection increases dramatically after receiving both doses," said CHCC in a statement.

As of Jan. 4, a total of 3,030 people on Saipan have already gotten their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Of that number, a total of 2,629 persons under Phase 1A were inoculated. That includes people in a health care setting, first responders, the homebound population, and the *man'amko* (65 years and older). In addition, 401 individuals were inject-

COTA reports 75.6% increase in transport trips in 2020

New transport data released by the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority shows a 75.6% increase in its transport trips of their demand responsive shared ride service and all COVID-19 transport needs.

COTA's trip report data, which provides transport trip information from 2019 and 2020, indicates the total number of trips in 2019 was 11,446. In 2020, the total number of trips jumped to 20,105.

"We are extremely pleased

to see this new data prove that a state transit system, in partnership with other government agencies and the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, can modernize and improve the ridership opportunities to better meet the needs of the communities we serve," said Alfreda PC Maratita, special assistant for Public Transportation.

Since the beginning of the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force's quarantine mission assignment in March 2020,

COTA has been activated to safely transport Saipan inbound travelers to the quarantine facility sites. This includes persons under investigation and individuals who need to be released after the quarantine stay has been satisfied.

Throughout the response, COTA has made notable strides of expanding their days and hours of operations from 6:30am to 10:00pm on weekdays (Monday-Friday) and 6:30am to 8pm (Saturday-Sunday and holidays). COTA also began providing free WiFi service on all transit fleet and broke ground on a future maintenance facility and administrative building in Lower Base, Saipan.

"COTA continues its momentum this new year with our best foot forward as we continue our efforts toward implementing a comprehensive public transportation system for the CNMI. We welcome more riders to utilize COTA as an alternate transportation option to get around in our community," said Maratita.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said that COTA has gone above and beyond in 2020. "Our COTA bus drivers, staff, and planners really went beyond the call of duty this last year by being an important part of our COVID-19 Task

Force, safely transporting our passengers to our quarantine sites. On top of that, they still maintained their regular ser-

vices and laid the groundwork for their new building for additional services in the future. Lt. Gov. [Arnold I.] Palacios

and I look forward to more excellent work from Alfreda and her team in 2021," said Torres. (PR)

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Special marine warning

A small craft advisory remains in effect until 6am today, Wednesday. This mean sea conditions will be hazardous to small craft. Strong wind will make navigation difficult and large waves can capsize small craft.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, east winds 15 to 20 knots with gusts up to 30 knots and seas of 8 to 11 feet will be present in Marianas coastal waters until 6am today.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid

navigating in hazardous conditions. (PR)

CHamoru commission meeting set

The *Kumisión i Fino' CHamoru yan i Fina'nâ'guen i Historia yan i Lina'la' i Tao-tao Tâno'* (Commission on CHamoru Language and the Teaching of the History and Culture of the Indigenous People of Guam) will hold its first January monthly Virtual meeting on Jan. 7, 2021, Thursday, from 12:30pm to 3:30pm on a Zoom link. Call Kumisión secretary Roland Blas for Zoom link information, special accommodations, and agenda at 480-4047 (rolandblas1973@gmail.com). (PR)

McDonald's donates to House of Maturana



McDonald's owner/operator Marcia E. Ayuyu, standing third from left, and McDonald's Guam and Saipan vice president Joe E. Ayuyu Jr., standing third from right, hand the check donation to Sr. Martha Ramarui, second from left, as they pose with other members of the Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

McDonald's recently made a check donation to the House of Maturana, which is not only a house of prayer but also serves as the retirement home for members of the Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz.

McDonald's owner/operator Marcia E. Ayuyu and her son, Joe E. Ayuyu Jr., who is

vice president of McDonald's Guam and Saipan, made the donation during a visit to the House of Maturana last Dec. 30, 2020. The amount of the donation was not disclosed.

"The Maturana sisters are in need of help for their daily necessities and we are aware of it, that is why we are here

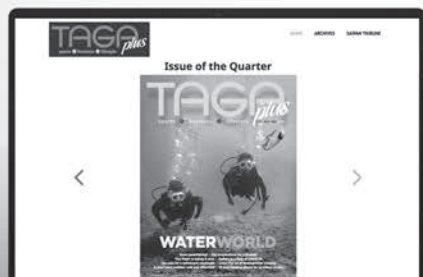
to help them," said Marcia E. Ayuyu.

The Ayuyus handed over the check donation to Sr. Martha Ramarui, who said, "We are so grateful to people like Mrs. Ayuyu who are willing to help us. May God continue to bless their entire family." (PR)

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Japanese groups push through with mochi-pounding event

The Japanese Society of the Northern Marianas pushed through with the mochi-pounding event last Dec. 28, 2020, at the Paseo de Marianas in Garapan.

Although the Marianas Visitors Authority earlier cancelled the staging of the annual Christmas programs this year, including the annual mochi-pounding event, because there were no tourists this year, the Japanese Society decided to hold the event from 4pm to 5pm at the Paseo de Marianas, in collaboration with non-profit organization PDM Promoters and the Japan Consular Office, to enable the local Japanese community to celebrate



Members of the Japanese Society of the Northern Marianas prepare the mochi for serving to the public last Dec. 28, 2020, at the Paseo de Marianas in Garapan.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



The mochi-pounding event is a traditional activity among the Japanese to welcome the New Year.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

the New Year. The mochi-pounding event is a traditional activity among the Japanese to welcome the New Year.

The mochi (rice cakes) made at the Dec. 28 event were coated with three different flavors—red beans, soybeans powder with sugar, and soy sauce with seaweed—and served to the public.

Children enjoyed not only eating mochi but also played

with some traditional Japanese toys like *takeuma*, *koma*, *hanetsuki* and *kendama*.

Due to COVID-19 coronavirus restrictions, the event was very limited to the public and the Japanese Society of the Northern Marianas followed the directives of the COVID-19 Task Force. Still, the society's members managed to enjoy the yearend event. (PR)



Children enjoyed not only eating mochi but also played with some traditional Japanese toys like *takeuma*, *koma*, *hanetsuki* and *kendama*.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



UOG ROTC alumnus tops Army infantry training

2nd Lt. Michael Schommer, a December 2019 graduate of the University of Guam's Army ROTC program who earned the nationwide Army ROTC honor of being a Distinguished Military Graduate, has continued to excel in the year following his graduation and commissioning.

Between February and October, Schommer earned multiple distinctions while completing the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course at the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga., and the

U.S. Army Ranger School.

Schommer graduated first in his class during the 19-week Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course, earning him the Army Commendation Medal from his infantry leaders. He shot "expert" on his assigned M4 carbine rifle during the course and went on to complete the Bradley Leader Course, which equips leaders to effectively fight and maneuver Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

He also earned the title of "Iron Man" for being the most physically fit in his class.

Finally, Schommer earned the Ranger Tab by completing the 62-day U.S. Army Ranger School, which is billed as "the Army's toughest course and the premier small-unit tactics and leadership school." He completed Ranger School events in the forests of Fort Benning, the mountains of Dahlonge, Ga., and the coastal swamp environment of Florida's panhandle at Eglin Air Force Base.

"2nd Lt. Schommer didn't stop at just physical feats," said Lt. Col. Shaun S. Con-



2nd Lt. Michael Schommer, a former University of Guam ROTC cadet, holds the infantry blue cord, a military decoration presented to soldiers upon completing the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Benning, Ga. Schommer graduated from the course in June first in his class in both fitness and academics.

MICHAEL SCHOMMER

lin, Schommer's commander. "He also attained the highest GPA within his platoon and the company, earning him the title of Distinguished Military Honor Graduate for IBOLC Class 03-20. 2nd Lt. Schommer's accomplishments bring great credit upon himself, the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course, the University of Guam's ROTC program, and the United States Army."

Schommer expressed gratitude to the ROTC staff at UOG for their guidance and support.

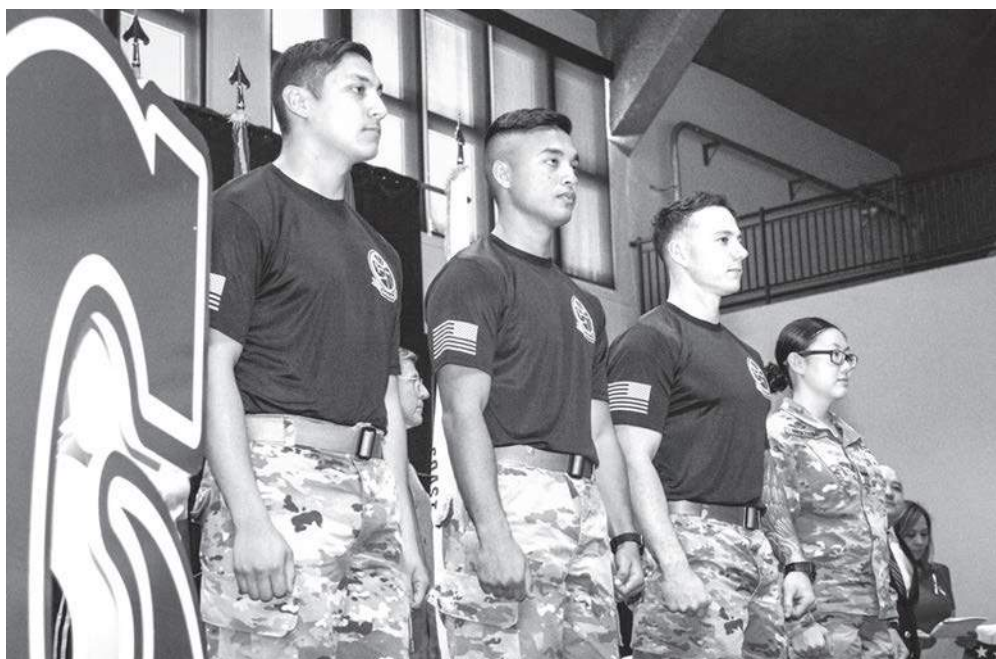
"I took a great deal of knowledge from what I learned at UOG and applied it toward this course. I'm proud to say that I graduated from UOG and will be forever thankful for the ROTC cadre's hard work and dedication toward the cadets."

Schommer will now assume duties as an active-duty Mechanized Infantry Platoon leader in Fort Bliss, Texas, where he will be charged with leading 35-40 soldiers and noncommissioned officers. (PR)



2nd Lt. Michael Schommer, a former University of Guam ROTC cadet, graduated in October from the Army's Ranger School and will be able to wear the Ranger Tab on his uniform for the remainder of his Army career.

MICHAEL SCHOMMER



Michael Schommer is recognized at a Veterans Day ceremony on Nov. 12, 2019, at the University of Guam alongside his fellow cadets for earning the nationwide Army ROTC honor of Distinguished Military Graduate. From left, Lucand Camacho, Brendan Santos, Schommer, and Jeanie Nguyen.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

DUE TO CONFIRMED SIGHTINGS OF DANGEROUS JELLYFISH

'Avoid swimming along eastern beaches of Saipan'

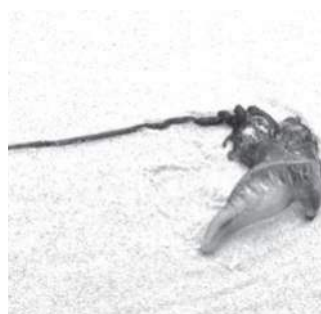
The Division of Fish and Wildlife of the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources would like to inform the public that there have been a number of Indo-Pacific man-o-war jellyfish sightings within the waters around Saipan.

Confirmed sightings have been reported along the eastern beaches of Saipan—Bird

Island Beach, Tank Beach, Marine Beach, and Laolao Beach. Sightings have also been reported along the western lagoon at Paupau Beach and Micro Beach.

As of Dec. 30, 2020, surveys along the Saipan beach access areas have confirmed the presence of Indo-Pacific man-o-war along the eastern beaches. This organism is known to in-

flict a painful sting on contact with their tentacles. They can be found floating within the ocean and washed up along the beach. The public is advised to avoid swimming in these areas



for the next several days.

If stung by this organism, remove animal or parts of animal from one's skin and flush with warm salt water. Do not rub the affected area. If an allergic reaction or breathing difficulty occurs, proceed to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. hospital for treatment. (PR)

Surveys along Saipan beaches have confirmed the presence of Indo-Pacific man-o-war along the eastern beaches. This organism is known to inflict a painful sting on contact with their tentacles. They can be found floating within the ocean and washed up along the beach.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



A lab sample of an Indo-Pacific man-o-war jellyfish.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Xerox suit demands over \$182K from IPI

By **KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA**
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Xerox Corp. Saipan is suing Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC to demand that it pay over \$182,000 that it allegedly owes for services and rental of equipment.

Xerox lawyer David Banes has asked the U.S. District Court for the NMI to issue an order awarding his client \$182,905.88 in damages plus late charges and interest to the maximum extent allowed by law.

The lawsuit also demanded the return of devices and related equipment rented to IPI, and for reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

Banes said the total invoiced amount that IPI has not paid is \$182,905.88, not counting interest or late charge.

He said all unpaid invoices except for one dated Dec. 1, 2020, were sent to IPI more than 45 days before the date of the complaint.

Banes said that, because of this, IPI is more than 15 days overdue. Banes noted that some of those unpaid invoices even date back to 2017.

According to Banes, IPI had not raised any objection to the unpaid invoices. He said Xerox has repeatedly asked IPI finance and accounting personnel regarding the overdue payments. Banes said IPI either did not respond at all, or reassured Xerox that they were working on paying Xerox. But it never did pay.

Xerox is suing IPI for breach of contract, unjust enrichment, and *quantum meruit*. In contract law, *quantum meruit* means something along the lines of "reasonable value of services."

According to the lawsuit, Xerox entered into a services master agreement or SMA with IPI on Feb. 26, 2016. Banes said Mark Badal, who was then, upon information and belief, the IT director of IPI, signed the SMA on behalf of IPI, and held himself out as the "IT director" of Best Sunshine Casino. Banes said Badal, at the time of signing the SMA, was an authorized representative of IPI with the authority and power to enter

the SMA on behalf of IPI and bind IPI to the SMA. In the SMA, IPI agreed to pay Xerox for services provided to IPI and its affiliates, within 30 days after the date of the corresponding invoice. IPI further agreed to pay Xerox a late charge of the greater of \$25 or 5% of the amount overdue but not to exceed the maximum amount permitted by law if Xerox did not receive a payment within 10 days of the due date.

In addition, the SMA provided that Xerox may recover an interest at the rate of 1.5% per month on amounts due, and immediately terminate its services if Xerox did not receive a payment within 15 days of the due date.

Banes said after the SMA was signed by the parties, up until now, Xerox has provided services and products under the SMA, including, without limitation, printing device rental, provision of related equipment, supplies, and customer services.

To date, Banes said IPI has not paid all the invoices of Xerox that were due.

Public warned of beach hazards

The public is being warned of a high rip current risk and men-o-war jellyfish through Friday night. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, Indo-Pacific men-o-war jellyfish are present along northeast, east, and southeast facing reefs, while dangerous rip currents are present along east facing reefs through Friday night.

Contact with Indo-Pacific men-o-war, alive or dead, can cause extreme pain. Residents of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are urged to stay out of the water, especially along northeast, east, and southeast facing beaches and reef lines. If men-o-war are not found along the beach, they could still be out in the water. Avoid making contact with men-o-war that have washed up on beaches,

especially when bubbles can be seen. If stung, take out the tentacles, wash the wound with vinegar and then treat with heat pack.

If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. (PR)

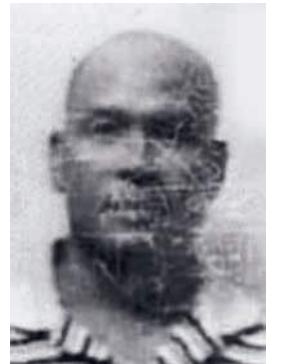
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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Roberto "Rob" Lusito is no longer connected with Sagittarius Corporation dba as Sagittarius General Construction effective January 1, 2021.



Any business transaction made by him on the company's behalf will not be honored by the aforesaid Company. Please report any such unauthorized transaction to our contact numbers at (670) 235-4796 / 785-4796 or email us at sagittarius1197@gmail.com.



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

Office of the Executive Director



INVITATION FOR BIDS CUC-IFB-20-007

FINA SISU WATERLINE REPLACEMENT (W16-051)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Fina Sisus Waterline Replacement in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists, in general installation of a new main waterline and lateral service line; connection to the existing waterline; relocation of water meters from private property to right-of-way; installation of gate valve assembly, flush hydrants, fire hydrants, air release valves, existing laterals service tap relocation to new main waterline, restoration of existing asphalt concrete road, restoration of existing concrete slab on grade; and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **365 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 28, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-20-007s, Fina Sisus Water Line Replacement", to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 14, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Bids shall be accompanied by a bid guarantee of not less than fifteen percent (15%) of the amount of the bid. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 4, 2021** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Dennis Formalejo, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email dennis.formalejo@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514

Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp

Website: <http://www.nmhc.gov.net>

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairperson of the Board, is hereby giving notice that the Special Board Meeting is scheduled on Thursday, January 7, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. at the NMHC Conference Room, Saipan. The public is welcome to submit written or oral comments regarding the agenda below. Individuals interested in attending the meeting and needing special accommodations are requested to contact NMHC in advance. Not more than ten (10) people are allowed in the conference room and social distancing will be enforced.

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

- Call to Order
- Roll Call
- Adoption of Agenda

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Divisional Update

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- CDBG-DR Updates

V. NEW BUSINESS

- CDBG-DR Homeowner Policies and Procedures
- CDBG-DR Homebuyer Policies and Procedures
- CDBG-DR Affordable Rental Housing Policies and Procedures
- CDBG-DR Gap-Filler to LIHTC Program Guidelines
- CDBG-DR Infrastructure Policies and Procedures
- CDBG-DR Personnel Matters

VI. LEGAL COUNSEL'S PENDING/ONGOING REPORT

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VIII. OTHER MATTERS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

(Notes: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13 (a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/ Marcie M. Tomokane
Chairperson of the Board

"NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

Opinion

Hafa Adai! Saipan Tribune

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Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

America or Trump? President's phone call poses Congress just that choice

Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's secretary of state, made a heroic effort Saturday to speak truth to a deranged politician's demand that he help throw the election for him.

As he found out, it's impossible to reason with a madman. That politician—that madman—is the nation's incumbent president, Donald J. Trump, who told Raffensperger: "There's nothing wrong with saying, you know, that you've recalculated."

It was the lowest moment in the history of the presidency, worse even than Richard Nixon's failed attempt to cover up his campaign's involvement in the Watergate burglary.

An even lower mark will be set by those Republicans in Congress who would become Trump's accomplices by voting to reject Democratic electoral slates this week. Trump may be insane. What's their excuse?

Fittingly, it was The Washington Post, whose investigations brought Nixon down, that obtained a recording and a transcript of Trump's impeachment-worthy telephone call Saturday.

For an hour and two minutes on the telephone, Trump harangued Raffensperger, pressuring him to help "find 11,780 votes" that would erase the 16 presidential electors Joe Biden won in Georgia. He regurgitated a slew of false claims and exaggerations, most of which had been fed to him by others.

Some revealed Trump's own irrational imagination.

"It's pretty clear that we won. We won very substantially in Georgia," Trump insisted. "You even see it by rally size, frankly. We'd be getting 25-30,000 people a rally and the competition would get less than 100 people. It never made sense."

When they could get a word in, Raffensperger and his lawyer, Ryan Germany, tried patiently to refute Trump's ravings. It was clear Trump wasn't listening.

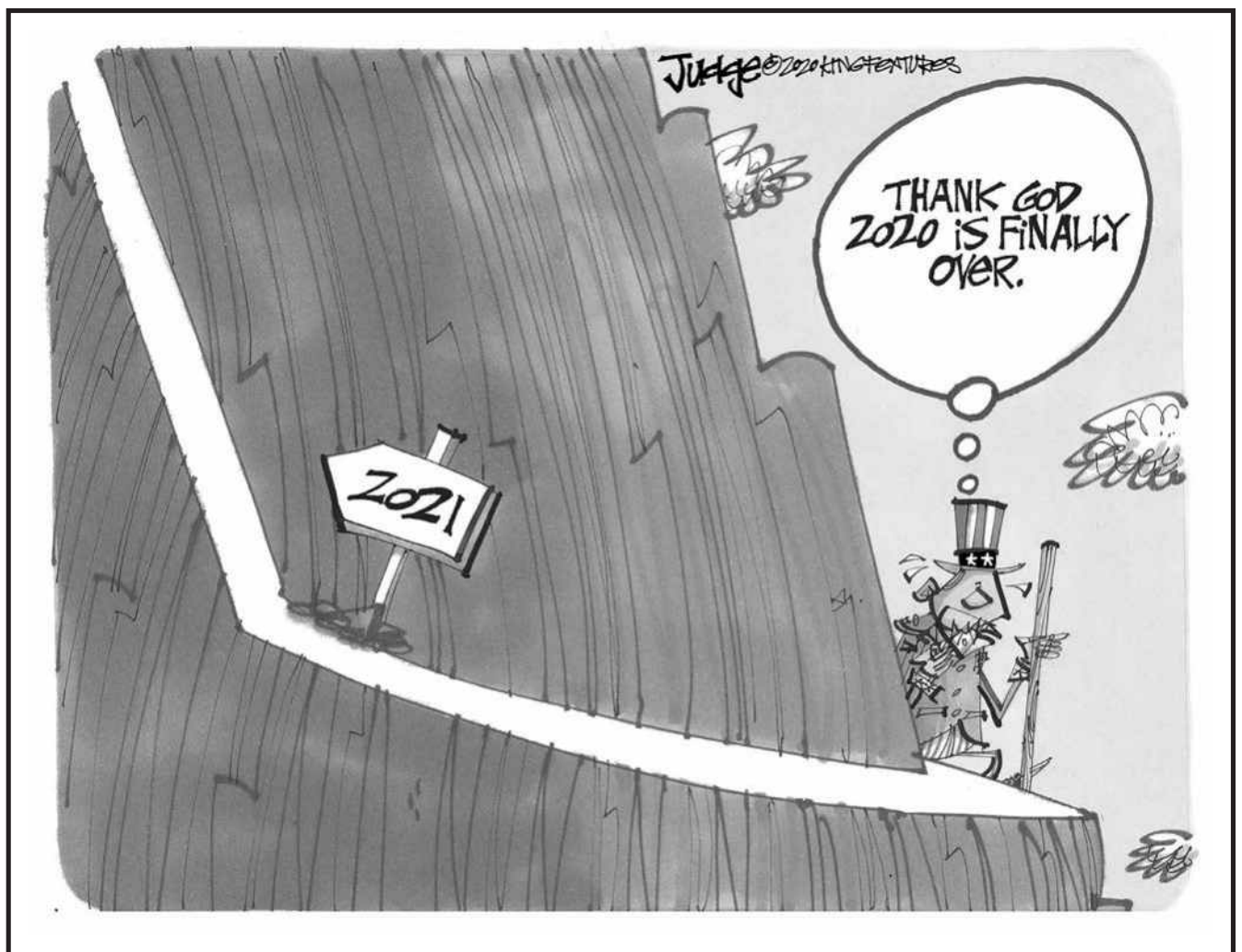
"For the last two months, we've been fighting the rumor whack-a-mole," Raffensperger said Monday on ABC. "And it was pretty obvious very early on, that we debunked every one of those theories that have been out there, but President Trump continues to believe them."

Trump also suggested that Raffensperger and Germany risked criminal prosecution if they refused to accept his wildly irrational allegations of massive election crimes by others.

"That's a big risk to you and to Ryan," said Trump, effectively committing what could reasonably be construed as two counts of attempted extortion.

It has been said from antiquity that "those whom God wishes to destroy, he first makes mad." So insanity would be a plausible defense, although it boggles the mind to imagine Trump admitting it. His megalomania and narcissism could quite possibly have shut his mind to the facts that the election was carried out and counted with scrupu-

See AMERICA on Next Page



Trump was right to bring troops home from Afghanistan. Biden should finish the job

When President Donald Trump took office in 2017, the war in Afghanistan was 16 years old. The original mission, meant to punish the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks and their Taliban enablers, was long since completed, but the Taliban held or contested 45% of Afghan territory. There were about 8,400 U.S. forces on the ground, far below the peak of 100,000 in 2010 (excluding contractors, who often equal or exceed the military presence proper). That deployment had been led by 17 commanders—turnover is high in the "graveyard of empires."

Today, the war in Afghanistan is approaching 20 years old. U.S. taxpayers have spent nearly a trillion dollars on it (more if you count long-term costs like interest on debt and military health care). The Taliban holds or contests about 65% of Afghan territory. At summer's end, there were about 8,600 U.S. forces on the ground, a figure that is supposed to drop to 2,500 by Inauguration Day. Some of those soldiers were born after the 9/11 attacks happened. Some are fighting the same war their fathers fought. When the war's 18th commander took charge in 2018, he declared it "time for this war in Afghanistan to end."

And still it continues. In failing to finish the war in Afghanistan, Trump has broken a major campaign promise, one he touted throughout his presidency as evidence of his distinction from the Washington establishment.

With Trump's departure from the White House imminent—and President-elect Joe Biden equally insistent that he will end this intervention—a review of Trump's record in this conflict is in order. What did he get right? And what can Biden do better to finally conclude our country's longest war?

Trump's record of tangible diplomatic accomplishments is limited, and his administration has tended toward heavy-handed, ineffective negotiating tactics, such as applying so-called maximum pressure on Iran. But Trump deserves credit for his occasional willingness to break the Washington habit of treating diplomacy as a reward for good behavior. Afghanistan was one of those times.

Trump's decision to open peace talks with the Taliban and the Afghan government was a smart and pragmatic move. It acknowledged the reality that the Taliban won't be eradicated in Afghanistan by American military means, and that intra-Afghan talks are vital if Afghanistan is ever to achieve a livable stability, let alone peace.

Trump also deserves credit for his reduction—limited though

By **BONNIE KRISTIAN**
Los Angeles Times

Bonnie Kristian is a fellow at Defense Priorities, a contributing editor at the Week and a columnist at Christianity Today.



it is—of the U.S. ground presence. Although Trump increased the number of troops in Afghanistan in his first few years in office, he never attempted a large-scale, Barack Obama-style surge, and he set a date for full American military departure in 2021. This is some progress, as is Trump's open recognition that exiting an unwinnable 19-year war is not precipitous.

Starting in January, Biden can improve on Trump's record. Instead of maintaining a small U.S. contingent in Afghanistan indefinitely, as the president-elect has said he plans to do, Biden should meet or hasten Trump's late spring 2021 exit deadline. This would not please many elected officials, but it would be popular with the majority of Americans, and it could be touted as a show of unity with Trump followers.

Biden should not follow the Trump plan when it comes to shifting resources to an expanded air war as the U.S. ground presence shrinks. During the Trump administration, the U.S. has dropped record numbers of bombs and other ordnance on Afghanistan. Civilian casualties have predictably spiked, and anti-U.S. radicalization is on the rise as a result.

Picking up negotiations where the Trump team left off, the Biden administration should take a more realistic approach to diplomacy. That means declining to condition our strategically necessary departure on the whims of the Taliban.

Diplomacy in Afghanistan must be given time to proceed at the slow and often halting pace it requires without another year or 10 of American military intervention. Insisting that a U.S. presence is required until a comprehensive treaty is signed and consistently respected will prolong the fighting for years to come. The same is true of other "conditions-based" withdrawal plans often touted in Washington—there will always be another militant group to suppress, another injustice to address. "Condi-

See TRUMP on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Hospitalized alone: a COVID horror story

By **AMY RUMP**
THE BALTIMORE SUN

As a nurse practitioner for over 13 years, I have cared for and loved numerous patients throughout my career. Never would I have imagined a world where loved ones were hospitalized alone, without a loved one or advocate.

On Thursday, July 2, my dad and brother drove my 70-year-old mother to the hospital due to emergent, excruciating back pain of unknown origin. After checking my mother into the ER, my dad had to leave his wife of 49 years alone because of COVID restrictions; she was nearly immobile and in severe pain. There was no wiggle room, no negotiating or pleading considered—no family caregiver allowed for my mother.

My father was devastated. It was like a dump and run, the worst kind of abandonment imaginable. The exact opposite of what we as humans hope to do best: protect the old, weak or sick at all costs. My dad had to put blind faith in our newly COVID-restricted medical system.

After 24 hours in the ER, 18 hours of which included no treatment, my mom's MRI showed three fractures in her back and cancer in her spine and hip, and she was being admitted to the inpatient oncology unit. My mother delivered the news to me over the phone. My dad was heartbroken. How had we missed



the signs of cancer for so long? Why was my mom alone? And why had COVID shut down every patient's right to have an advocate at their bedside?

It has been the worst kind of horror story. Pandemic hit, the world shut down and sick loved ones sit alone—and sometimes die alone—in hospitals. Unimaginable.

Once the shock from the cancer diagnosis passed, anger set in. How can we as humans do this to each other? How can one virus have derailed safety measures we fought so hard to ensure for patients?

The only power I had was to work every medical channel, network and brain I could think of to get an advocate for my mom. I called patient advocacy, the charge nurse, the intern caring for her and all the outpatient physicians I knew who might have a link to the hospital. Every answer for my dad was “no” due to COVID. The only exception they would consider, and this too would have to be cleared by the hospital, was if my mom had only days to survive, and even then, it was only one family member per patient. Flabbergasted, appalled and deeply saddened we had to make the

most of what we could do as a family from the outside.

It will take time to truly realize the implications of not having an advocate with my mom. But one immediate, and very likely scenario, was an increased length of hospital stay and adverse events she encountered—possible COVID exposure in the ER, urinary tract infection and delayed testing and diagnosis. According to the British Medical Journal from 2018, adverse medical errors decreased by 38% on several inpatient pediatric settings around the nation after “implementation of a structured verbal and written communication intervention for rounds that emphasized health literacy, family engagement, and bidirectional communication.” Between my mom's pain, post op recovery from a hip replacement with rod insertion, and an abundance of narcotics, there is no question things were missed, and communication between provider and family suffered.

Time will hopefully heal my mother. But will time heal the emotional trauma she endured in a hospital alone due to the COVID restrictions? What about the trauma of not being with those we love during their greatest time of need? Unfortunately, the rate of hospitalization continues to climb, so we need better policies enacted now to safely get at least one patient advocate in with their loved ones, despite COVID. This can safely be done with testing, masks, waivers and staying for the whole length of admission. If nothing changes, these severe COVID restrictions could cause more harm than good, including a much higher fatality rate for those with and without COVID. Could the fallout from COVID be worse than the disease itself?

Every patient and hospital case is unique and must be handled on an individual basis properly, ethically, and with a strong consideration for the emotional ramifications that could last beyond COVID. Change must happen now before the emotional wounds are too deep for time to heal.

Amy Rump is a nurse practitioner. Email: amy.persinger@gmail.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Enough is enough!

In view of his latest disregard for our Constitution and its laws for *all* Americans, the President should be arrested and charged with sedition along with Ted Cruz and his gang of enablers. Enough is enough of our dictator wannabe!

Herb Stark
Mooresville, NC

AMERICA

From Page 8

lous integrity, and that Biden won it.

It is also possible, though, that Trump knows all that. If so, he is as deliberate, cynical and diabolical a liar as has ever stalked the planet earth. Even Third World military juntas come up with better excuses for overthrowing elected governments.

Make no mistake. That's what Trump was trying to do.

“Can you imagine how many other calls like this he might have made over the past four years that we don't yet know about?” tweeted presidential historian Michael Beschloss.

It can be imagined. Trump would also need to overthrow the returns in Arizona and Wisconsin just to get a 269-269 electoral vote tie that would require the House of Representatives to elect the next president. It's well known that he tried to delay the certification of Pennsylvania votes, and he and his surrogates filed unsuccessful court challenges against both Wisconsin's and Pennsylvania's.

TRUMP

From Page 8

tions-based” withdrawal means no withdrawal at all.

Biden seems to understand the trap set when we tie troops to unrealistic and endlessly malleable goals, and to grasp that a commitment of U.S. military force must have limits. “There's a thousand places (our military) could go to deal with injustice,” he said in a February interview. “The question is,” Biden continued, “is America's vital self-interest ... or the vital self-interest of one of our allies at stake? ... The responsibility I have is to protect America's national self-interest and not put our women and men in harm's way to try to solve every single problem in the world by use of force.”

Following this narrower and more achievable concept of the United States' role would have improved Trump's record in Afghanistan. Biden would do well to stick to it.

A Trump Termination Trilogy

Farewell Lying Loser Leader

“Parting is all we know of heaven and all we need of hell.”
—Emily Dickinson (Dec. 10, 1830 - May 1, 1886)

Farewell falsifier liar your right wing reign doth close
from tragic tweeter tales to wily wiles farewell
your negativity, impeachment failed to expel
angry arguments that stunk up the nation's nose.

Your alternate reality and poor judgement shows
you slowed your departure not done very well
books keep pouring out your sordid story to tell
tax fraud, cheating, insults, now the world knows.

When gone and you'll go no matter how hard you try
it can't be avoided regardless what you do or say
the entire world is watching you with an open eye
and millions of Americans will sing Oh Happy Day!

Few will shed tears, it is your last hurrah, so bye bye
America is better now, “great again”, come what may.

45 Departs, 22,000 Lies, and False Starts

On your last day in the White House Oval Office
when hardworking staff lay dust covers on chairs
what about the place you called ‘a dump’ will you miss?
are you paranoid about presidential portrait stares?
compare them with your self-centered chaotic time
and positive laws they signed with a presidential pen
think about the ‘wall,’ migrant children, swamp slime
about the elected national leader you have never been
then come up with some last minute departing thought
how your reign withstood your temper tantrums and rage
a more sordid time in office has never been wrought
but since you lost the race us poets need not prove

LITERARY NOOK

By **JOEY ‘PEPE BATBON’ CONNOLLY**

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.








any mocking or sarcastic style for your last move.
Your parting is sweet and sour. Let us party tomorrow!

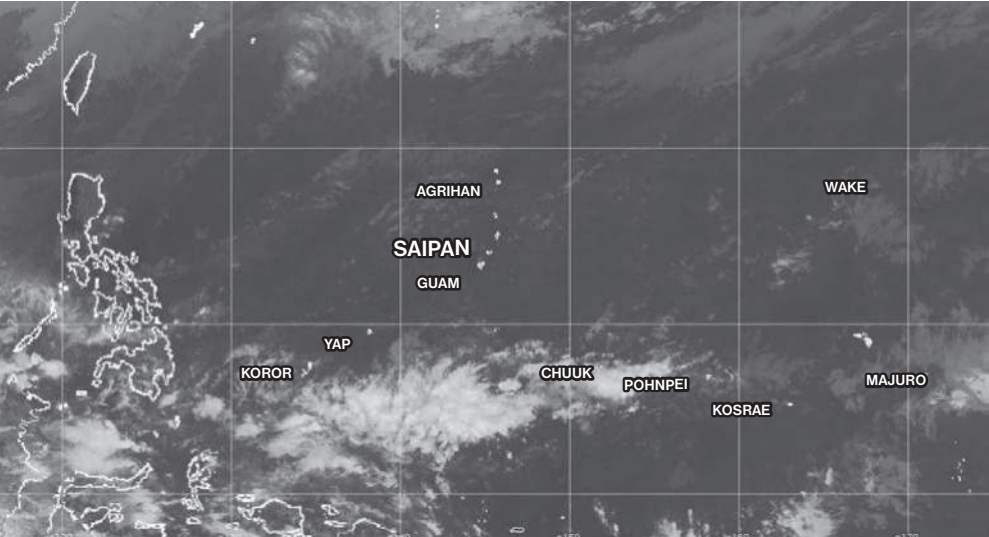
Trumpty Dumpty's Last Fall, Autumn 2020

Too many tweets with very little common sense
using your thumbs to make ridiculous commands
staff and cabinet bail out with little help from Pence
he and other sycophants lip synch to beat the band
then fraudulent tax cheat, as tacky tweeter terrorist
in arguments and clashes with world leaders you look
foolish for not looking at or reading a daily briefing list
seldom turning or opening pages of any brief or book
a national disgrace, a present danger to our democracy
as you take final steps down the White House stairs
part and parcel of your laughable lying legacy will be
failure, freaking out, faking it on many national affairs
lack of a moral compass or showing any empathy at all
your puerile play is over, time for your demise and fall.

Note from the author: Readers, please note, I wrote this sonnet trilogy last October 2020 while visiting my older brother, who is in poor health, and my two sisters in upstate New York. After flying over and with fear of COVID-19 death for all four of us due to our respective ages, I quarantined for two weeks in the house I grew up in. I saved these sonnets as 45's farewell poems. We can see he's not going “gentle into that good night.” I'm counting the days to the 2021 inauguration. Good riddance to bad rubbish.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
									
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers.		Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms.		Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	
86°	77°	86°	77°	86°	77°	87°	77°	87°	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 7:07 AM, TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite and radar show scattered showers moving through the region as the tail end of a trade-wind disturbance moves off to the west. Another weak disturbance is to the east, crossing 150E, but has eroded some of its cloud cover the past several hours. Latest scatterometer analysis shows 20-25 kt winds over the Marianas with winds pushing closer to 30 kt over the far northern Marianas, and buoys and altimetry data show seas between 8 and 11 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.


- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20



seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mp and, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html> and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 77°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°	
Yap	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Mostly Cloudy	84° / 78°	
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:44 AM	6:00 PM
Thursday	6:45 AM	6:01 PM
Friday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM
Sunday	6:45 AM	6:03 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	12:03 PM	-
Thursday	12:33 AM	12:45 PM	-
Friday	1:30 AM	1:30 PM	-
Saturday	2:28 AM	2:17 PM	-
Sunday	3:29 AM	3:09 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	77° / 62°	
Beijing	Sunny	11° / 0°	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	65° / 55°	
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	81° / 72°	
London	Partly Cloudy	39° / 29°	
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	68° / 49°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 75°	
Melbourne	Clouds	65° / 57°	
Miami	Mostly Sunny	72° / 62°	
New York	Mostly Sunny	44° / 31°	
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	48° / 37°	
Paris	Cloudy	38° / 30°	
Busan	Sunny	37° / 19°	
Rome	Showers	51° / 39°	
Salem	Partly Cloudy	57° / 38°	
San Francisco	Showers	55° / 46°	
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	28° / 1°	
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	49° / 37°	
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	46° / 31°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
6:37 AM	Low Tide	0.11	
1:32 PM	High Tide	1.78	
8:17 PM	Low Tide	0.55	
-	-	-	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6	UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5	UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.				
FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020				
SAIPAN TO ROTA				
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1203 9:00 9:15 Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1204 10:00 10:15 Daily
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri	1205 11:00 11:15 Temporarily Unavailable
ROTA TO SAIPAN				
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1206 12:00 12:15 Temporarily Unavailable
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1207 13:00 13:15 Temporarily Unavailable
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri	1208 14:00 14:15 Daily
ROTA TO GUAM				
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable	1209 15:00 15:15 Daily
GUAM TO ROTA				
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable	1210 16:00 16:15 Daily
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable	1211 17:00 17:15 Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily	1212 17:00 17:15 Daily
				TINIAN TO SAIPAN
				FLIGHT # DEPARTURE ARRIVAL FREQUENCY
				2101 7:30 7:45 Temporarily Unavailable
				2102 8:30 8:45 Daily
				2103 9:30 9:45 Daily
				2104 10:30 10:45 Daily
				2105 11:30 11:45 Temporarily Unavailable
				2106 12:30 12:45 Temporarily Unavailable
				2107 13:30 13:45 Temporarily Unavailable
				2108 14:30 14:45 Daily
				2109 15:30 15:45 Daily
				2110 16:30 16:45 Daily
				2111 17:30 17:45 Daily
				2112 18:30 18:45 Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Sea Shell Pink
looks inward amidst COVID-19

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Unbeknownst to everyone, Saipan has been an exporter of aloha shirts, lavalavas, and Hawaiian dresses, bags, and accessories for nearly 40 years now thanks to Sea Shell Pink and its owner Hiroko Miyagawa.

Taylor Mafe Ngalongalo said Miyagawa founded Sea Shell Pink in 1982 and the dress shop has been exporting their one-of-a-kind island dresses and shirts to neighboring Guam. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sea Shell Pink brand were sold at their store inside the Hagatna Mall.

At its height, Sea Shell Pink exported twice a month around 30 aloha adult shirts, 30 aloha shirts for children, and the same number of Hawaiian dresses, and lavalavas, bags, and accessories.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 concerns and the high number of cases in the U.S. territory forced Sea Shell Pink to shut down its retail store in Guam.

The pandemic has also af-

NYSE withdraws plans to delist
three Chinese phone carriers

NEW YORK (AP)—The New York Stock Exchange says it is withdrawing plans to remove shares of three Chinese state-owned phone carriers under an order by President Donald Trump.

The exchange cited “further consultation” with U.S. regulators but gave no other details of its decision in a notice issued late Monday.

The NYSE earlier announced plans to remove China Telecom Corp. Ltd., China Mobile Ltd. and China Unicom Hong Kong Ltd. after Trump’s order in November barring Americans from investing in securities issued by companies deemed to be linked to the Chinese military.

Hong Kong-traded shares in the three companies surged Tuesday. China Telecom rose 5.7%, China Mobile jumped



Sea Shell Pink stands out for the unique fabrics from Hawaii and Japan it uses to make aloha shirts and Hawaiian dresses.

fect local sales, as Japanese tourists who would normally spend top dollar in purchasing their unique aloha shirts and Hawaiian dresses are no more. Ditto with Chinese and Korean tourists who also were buying a lot of their island-themed merchandise before the CNMI closed its borders due to COVID-19.

Sea Shell Pink was especially popular with Japanese

tourists who arrived via Skymark Airlines Inc. as the dress shop is a member of the low-cost carrier’s rewards program, Skymark Spot. Shirts sold for \$55 each and tourists can get their custom-made shirts a day after ordering them.

Sea Shell Pink used to make the uniforms for staff of Japan Airlines and before the pandemic was the official dressmaker of Pacific Development, Inc. and Grandvrio Hotel. They also made wedding gowns and suits for locally based wedding planners.

Amazon's Bezos tops list of richest charitable gifts in 2020

SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP)—The world’s richest person made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020, according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy’s annual list of top donations, a \$10 billion gift that is intended to help fight climate change.

Amazon’s founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos, whose “real-time” worth Forbes magazine estimates at roughly \$188 billion, used the contribution to launch his Bezos Earth Fund. The fund, which supports non-profits involved in the climate crisis, has paid out \$790 million to 16 groups so far, according to the Chronicle.

Setting aside Bezos’ whopping gift, though, the sum



Sea Shell Pink is located on the second floor of the building where Bank of Saipan is in Garapan.

With the Japanese market as well as Chinese and Korean tourists not expected to come back until the middle of the year, the dress shop is now concentrating on the local market.

While they didn’t close due to COVID-19 concerns, sales were obviously affected as they’re now down to sometimes just two customers a day. Good thing I Love Saipan orders for facemasks have kept

them busy as current orders are in the hundreds. There’s also online purchases from Japan, which Sea Shell Pink wants to grow more.

Ngalongalo said Miyagawa really has passion for making aloha shirts and Hawaiian dresses and that’s the reason Sea Shell Pink still exists 38 years after it was first established

Miyagawa herself revealed that she chose the name Sea Shell Pink because the first two words best represent the tropical paradise that Saipan is and the color pink is such a cute color.

Aside from the expert craftsmanship, Sea Shell Pink

also stands out for the unique fabrics from Hawaii and Japan it uses to make aloha shirts and Hawaiian dresses. Ngalongalo and her fellow tailor Mercy Bandoja also have all together over 70 years of sewing experience.

Currently, Sea Shell Pink has a promotion where every purchase of an aloha shirt gets you a free mask in the same pattern.

Sea Shell Pink’s first location was at Kinpachi Restaurant then it moved to the La Fiesta Mall and Vestcor before relocating to its new home in Garapan on the second floor of the building where Bank of Saipan is situated. The dress shop is open from Monday to Friday, 11am-5pm. For more information, call 233-8191.

STOCK
PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW
30,223.89
-382.59
1.25%

S&P
3,700.65
-55.42
1.48%

NASDAQ
12,698.45
-189.83
1.47%

EXCHANGE RATES

Hong Kong Dollar	7.7530	Russian Ruble	73.2343
Australian Dollar	1.2974	Singapore Dollar	1.3187
British Pound	0.7352	Japanese Yen	102.9520
Canadian Dollar	1.2748	Malaysian Ringgit	3.9782
Chinese Yuan	6.3498	New Zealand Dollar	1.3859
Euro	0.8154	Philippine Peso	47.2295
		Taiwan Dollar	27.5765
		Thailand Baht	29.9010

Nation

Biden, Trump warn of high stakes of Georgia Senate runoffs

ATLANTA, Ga. (AP)—President-elect Joe Biden on Monday told Georgia Democrats they had the power to “chart the course” for a generation as President Donald Trump rehashed old grievances over his November loss in final pleas ahead of runoff elections that will determine control of the U.S. Senate.

Trump made his final-hours pitch to voters at a nighttime rally in north Georgia, where Republicans were banking on strong voter turnout on Tuesday to reelect Sen. Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue and hold control of the chamber.

Biden campaigned with Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock in Atlanta, hoping he could recreate the coalition that secured him a narrow victory in the presidential race in November.

“Folks, this is it. This is it. It’s a new year, and tomorrow can be a new day for Atlanta, for Georgia and for America,” Biden said at a drive-in rally. “Unlike any time in my career, one state—one state—can chart the course, not just for the four years but for the next generation.”

The stakes have drawn hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign spending to a once solidly Republican state that now finds itself as the nation’s premier battleground. Biden won Georgia’s 16 electoral votes by about 12,000 votes out of 5 million cast in November, though Trump continues pushing false assertions of widespread fraud that even his now-

AP
President-elect Joe Biden campaigns in Atlanta, Monday, Jan. 4, 2021, for Senate candidates Raphael Warnock, center, and Jon Ossoff, left.



former attorney general and Georgia’s Republican secretary of state—along with a litany of state and federal judges—have said did not happen.

The president’s trip Monday comes a day after disclosure of a remarkable telephone call he made to the Georgia secretary of state over the weekend. Trump pressured Republican Brad Raffensperger to “find” enough votes to overturn Georgia’s election results ahead of Wednesday’s joint session of Congress that will certify Biden’s Electoral

College victory. The call highlighted how Trump has used the Georgia campaign to make clear his continued hold on Republican politics.

Angry after the Raffensperger call, Trump floated the idea of pulling out of the rally but was persuaded to go ahead with it so he will have a chance to reiterate his claims of election fraud. Republicans are wary as to whether Trump will focus only on himself and fail to promote the two GOP candidates.

Trump, at a rally in Dalton, Georgia, again pressed false

claims that the November election was “rigged” and urged Republicans to “swamp” the polls Tuesday.

“The Democrats are trying to steal the White House, you cannot let them,” Trump said. “You just can’t let them steal the U.S. Senate, you can’t let it happen.”

Biden on Monday took aim

at Trump’s scheme by declaring that “politicians cannot assert, take or seize power” by undermining legitimate elections.

Biden said he needs a Senate majority to pass legislation to combat the coronavirus, and he blasted Perdue and Loeffler as obstructionist Trump loyalists. Loeffler says she will join other

Republican lawmakers in objecting to the Electoral College certification of Biden’s victory by Congress on Wednesday.

“You have two senators who think they’ve sworn an oath to Donald Trump, not the United States Constitution,” Biden said.

Earlier Monday, Vice President Mike Pence told a crowd of conservative Christian voters at a rally in Milner, Georgia, to stop a Democratic takeover in Washington. “We’re going to keep Georgia, and we’re going to save America,” Pence said at Rock Springs Church in Milner.

Perdue addressed the church crowd by telephone while quarantining over coronavirus exposure, claiming that “the very future of our republic is on the line” and declaring the duty to vote “a calling from God.”

Republicans need just one victory to maintain Senate control and force Biden to contend with divided government. Democrats need a sweep for a 50-50 split, giving the tiebreaking vote to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, who will succeed Pence as the Senate’s presiding officer. That would give Democrats a Senate majority to go along with their control of the House and executive branch.

Many more in GOP rejecting Trump’s bid to undo his defeat

WASHINGTON (AP)—With mounting desperation, President Donald Trump appealed to Republican lawmakers Monday to reverse his election loss to Joe Biden when Congress convenes for a joint session this week to confirm the Electoral College vote.

Trump’s unprecedented attempt to overturn the presidential election is splitting the Republican Party. Some GOP lawmakers backing Trump are rushing ahead, despite an outpouring of condemnation from current and former party officials warning the effort is undermining Americans’ faith in democracy. All 10 living former defense secretaries wrote in an op-ed article that “the time for questioning the results has passed.”

It’s unclear the extent to which GOP leaders in Congress will be able to control Wednesday’s joint session, which could drag into the night, though the challenges to the election are all but cer-

tain to fail. Trump himself is whipping up crowds for a Wednesday rally near the White House.

Trump’s allies are taking up his unfounded claims of voter fraud. But according to a consensus of election officials in the states he’s disputing—as well as his former Attorney General William Barr—there is no evidence of fraud that could change the election outcome. Officials who have control over elections in their states, including battlegrounds Biden won, have certified those results as valid.

Of the more than 50 lawsuits the president and his allies have filed challenging results, nearly all have been dismissed or dropped. He’s also lost twice at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The effort to keep Trump in office is being led by Sens. Josh Hawley of Missouri and Ted Cruz of Texas, along with rank-and-file House members, some on the party’s fringe.

“Just got off the phone with @realDonaldTrump,” tweeted

newly elected Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, who is aligned with a conspiracy group backing Trump.

“He wants you to call your Rep & Senators TODAY, ALL DAY!” she tweeted Monday. “Don’t let Republicans be the Surrender Caucus!” She later said she joined the president on Air Force One as he traveled to Georgia.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has tried to prevent his party from engaging in this battle, which could help define the GOP in the post-Trump era. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, a Trump ally, has declined to say much publicly on it.

Both Hawley and Cruz are potential 2024 presidential contenders, vying for Trump’s base of supporters. Vice President Mike Pence, who is under pressure to tip the results for Trump, will be closely watched as he presides in a ceremonial role over Wednesday’s joint session.

Biden largely mum on Trump’s effort to reverse election

WASHINGTON (AP)—President-elect Joe Biden is mostly steering clear of the controversy engulfing President Donald Trump’s final days in office, aiming to project the different approach to governing Americans can expect when he moves into the White House on Jan. 20.

Biden and his team have offered a muted response to Trump’s efforts to overturn the election, which reached a new level this past weekend when he pressured Georgia’s Republican secretary of state to “find” enough votes to flip the state in his favor.

While some Democrats say Trump’s actions merit new impeachment proceedings, Biden has been more circumspect. He didn’t address the matter directly during his visit to Georgia Monday afternoon where he campaigned for two Democratic Senate candidates, only hinting at Trump’s efforts to reverse the result of the election by joking, “I don’t know why he still wants the job—he doesn’t want to do the work.”

Biden later spoke broadly about Democrats’ “opposi-

tion friends” realizing that “power flows from the people.”

“Politicians cannot assert, take or seize power. Power is granted by the American people alone,” he said.

His comments followed a brief written statement from senior adviser Bob Bauer this weekend decrying Trump’s “assault on American democracy.”

The low-key approach is in keeping with Biden’s overall strategy to focus on preparing to assume the presidency even as Trump goes to ever-greater lengths to sow doubt about the election results. The relatively muted response reflects an effort to reassure Americans that Biden will take a starkly different approach to leading during a time of historic turmoil over the coronavirus pandemic and the economy.

“The country is ready to move forward, and President-elect Biden is going to remain focused on the work ahead of us in completing a successful transition and putting together an administration that will get this virus under control and build our economy back

better,” said Biden adviser Kate Bedingfield.

Biden’s aides believe Americans outside Washington want to hear more about how the Biden presidency will help them and less about the partisan squabbling that has characterized the past four years of Trump’s presidency.

So while Biden has chosen his moments to weigh in on Trump’s attacks on the election results—he delivered a speech denouncing Trump’s actions after the Electoral College certified his win in mid-December—he’s largely focused on his Cabinet nominees and fleshing out his response to the pandemic.

And while some Democrats on Capitol Hill have raised the prospect of impeachment, Democratic leadership has emphasized that the party’s focus is on Biden’s agenda rather than on Trump’s malfeasance.

“We’re not looking backward. We’re looking forward to the inauguration of Joe Biden on January 20th,” said House Democratic Caucus Chair Hakeem Jeffries during a press conference Monday.

Asia

Thailand confirms 745 new coronavirus cases

BANGKOK (AP)—Thailand has registered 745 new coronavirus cases, with a new death reported in Bangkok, where a semi-lockdown went into effect.

The Center of COVID-19 Situation Administration said Monday that the new infections bring the total number since last January to 8,439, while the death toll has climbed to 65.

The agency said the number included 152 Thais and 577 migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, the province next to Bangkok that is the epicenter of the new outbreak.

Nearly all the infected workers were employed in fish markets and factories and are all housed in dormitories that have been closed off to the public since the recent outbreak began. Since the initial spike in late December, the virus has now been found in 54 of Thailand's 73 provinces.

The government has ordered all schools closed from Monday and had taken earlier other steps to try and restrict the spread of the virus, including closing bars, massage parlors and playgrounds, and banning all public gatherings.

It has not yet closed down shopping malls or stores, while restaurants are still allowed to operate but cannot serve alcoholic beverages.

Provincial governors can also order their own, tougher, measures. Bangkok authorities have announced that all eateries can only do takeaway service from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. starting Monday evening.

The government has been

considering tougher measures if the spread of the virus does not slow down around the country.

Elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region:

■ Mask wearing has become mandatory in some circumstances in Australia's largest city due to the pandemic risk. People risk a 200 Australian dollar (\$154) fine in Sydney if they don't wear masks in shopping malls, on public transport and in various indoor areas. New South Wales state Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant could not say how long the measure would be in place. The state on Monday reported its first 24-hour period without a new coronavirus infection being detected since Dec. 15. A cluster that started in Sydney last month has spread to Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city, where masks have been mandatory since July. Australian Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly said three new cases had been detected in Melbourne during the latest 24-hour period, bringing the national total to 28,504 cases since the pandemic began. Only 26 COVID-19 patients were in Australian hospitals on Monday, and none was in an intensive care unit, Kelly said.

■ Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga says vaccine approval is being speeded up to curb the spread of the coronavirus, and he promised to consider declaring a state of emergency. Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike and the governors of Saitama, Chiba and

Kanagawa had asked the national government Saturday to declare the emergency after the capital saw a daily record of 1,337 cases on New Year's Eve. The declaration carries no legal penalties but works as a strong warning for people to work from home, reduce nonessential outings and social distance, as well as having businesses close early. Suga told reporters the ruling party will push for a legal change when parliament reconvenes later this month, to allow penalties for violations. He said vaccine approval is now expected this month instead of February. Vaccinations are expected to begin next month.

■ Sri Lankan authorities say schools will partially reopen next week after being shut for nearly three months because of the coronavirus. Classes in primary schools will resume in most places on Jan. 11, and grade 11 classes on Jan. 25. Students in grade 11 face a compulsory government exam in two months. However, the education ministry said it decided not to reopen schools in the capital region, where COVID-19 cases are still being detected. Schools were closed in October following outbreaks at a garment factory and a fish market. Schools in some areas reopened in November but were closed again for school holidays in December. Sri Lanka has also banned public gatherings and imposed restrictions on public transport. It has reported 44,774 cases as of Sunday, including 213 fatalities.

Family asks for help in release of Kashmir separatist leader

ISLAMABAD (AP)—The family of a prominent separatist leader from disputed Kashmir who is being held in an Indian jail for alleged anti-state activities appealed Monday to the United Nations for help in securing her release.

Ahmad bin Qasim, the son of Aasiyeh Andrabi, who heads an Islamic women's group in Indian-controlled Kashmir, was joined by Pakistani human rights minister Shireen Mazari in issuing the appeal during a rare news conference in Pakistan's capital Islamabad.

Andrabi and two other activists, Sofi Fahmeeda and Nahida Nasreen, were charged by a court in India last month.

Andrabi's group generally campaigns against perceived acts of immorality in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

On Monday, her son—who is studying in Pakistan—and Mazari criticized Indian forces for committing human rights violations in Kashmir and asked human rights organizations to work for Andrabi's release and the release of other women jailed in India. Qasim said his mother suffers from asthma and in need of medical care.

Qasim's father, Ashiq Husain Faktoo, was a Kashmiri separatist rebel commander and Indian authorities convicted him of murder in the death of a human rights activist in Indian-controlled Kashmir. The region is split between Pakistan and India and claimed by both in its entirety. Pakistan wants India to drop charges against Andrabi and her husband and release them. Pakistan and India have a

history of bitter relations and have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since gaining independence from Britain in 1947. Relations between the two countries have been further strained since August 2019, when India revoked the Muslim-majority region's semi-autonomous status and divided it into two federally governed territories, touching off anger on both sides of the frontier.

India has an estimated 700,000 soldiers in its part of Kashmir, fighting nearly a dozen rebel groups since 1989. In many areas, the region has the feel of an occupied country, with soldiers in full combat gear patrolling streets and frisking civilians. More than 68,000 people, most of them civilians, have been killed in the conflict.

World

UK leader orders new lockdown for England

LONDON (AP)—Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Monday a new national lockdown for England until at least mid-February to combat a fast-spreading new variant of the coronavirus, even as Britain ramped up its vaccination program by becoming the first nation to start using the shot developed by Oxford University and drugmaker AstraZeneca.

Johnson said people must stay at home again, as they were ordered to do so in the first wave of the pandemic in March, this time because the new virus variant was spreading in a "frustrating and alarming" way.

"As I speak to you tonight, our hospitals are under more pressure from COVID than at any time since the start of the pandemic," he said in a televised address.

From Tuesday, primary and secondary schools and colleges will be closed for face to face learning except for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils. University students will not be returning until at least mid-February. People were told to work from home unless it's impossible to do so, and leave home only for essential trips.

All nonessential shops and personal care services like hairdressers will be closed, and restaurants can only operate takeaway services.

As of Monday, there were 26,626 COVID-19 patients in hospitals in England, an increase of more than 30%



In this image taken from video, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a televised address to the nation from 10 Downing Street, London, Monday Jan. 4, 2021, setting out new emergency measures to control the spread of coronavirus in England.

from a week ago. That is 40% above the highest level of the first wave in the spring.

Large areas of England were already under tight restrictions as officials try to control an alarming surge in coronavirus cases in recent weeks, blamed on a new variant of COVID-19 that is more contagious than existing variants. Authorities have recorded more than 50,000 new infections daily since passing that milestone for the first time on Dec. 29. On Monday, they reported 407 virus-related deaths to push the confirmed death toll total to 75,431, one of the worst in Europe.

The U.K.'s chief medical officers warned that without further action, "there is a material risk of the National Health Service in several areas being overwhelmed over the next 21 days."

Hours earlier, Scotland's leader, Nicola Sturgeon, also imposed a lockdown there

with broadly similar restrictions from Tuesday until the end of January.

"I am more concerned about the situation we face now than I have been at any time since March last year," Sturgeon said in Edinburgh.

The announcements came on the day U.K. health authorities began putting the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine into arms around the country, fueling hopes that life may begin returning to normal by the spring.

"The weeks ahead will be the hardest yet but I really do believe that we're entering the last phase of the struggle," Johnson said.

Britain has secured the rights to 100 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which is cheaper and easier to use than some of its rivals. In particular, it doesn't require the super-cold storage needed for the Pfizer vaccine.

Mexico approves AstraZeneca vaccine for emergency use

MEXICO CITY (AP)—Mexico approved the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine for emergency use Monday, hoping to spur a halting vaccination effort that has only given about 44,000 shots since the third week of December, about 82% of the doses the country has received.

Prior to this, the Pfizer vaccine was the only one approved for use in Mexico. Mexican regulators approved the AstraZeneca shot. Assistant Health Secretariat Hugo López-Gatell said he erroneously reported approval for Chinese vaccine maker CanSino, noting it had not yet submitted full study results for safety and efficacy.

Mexico has pinned much of its hopes on the inexpen-

sive, one-shot CanSino vaccine. "It will make things a lot easier for us," López-Gatell said.

López-Gatell, who heads up efforts to deal with the pandemic, had to explain why he was spotted at a Pacific coast beach, apparently sitting at sea-side restaurant without a face mask on.

López-Gatell has repeatedly counseled Mexicans to stay at home. He has also cast doubt on how whether face masks protect people from catching coronavirus.

López-Gatell said he saw nothing wrong with going to the Pacific coast state of Oaxaca to see friends and relatives, noting that the virus alert level was lower there.

Over the weekend, lo-

cal media posted photos of López-Gatell sitting in the open-air restaurant, reportedly in the laid-back beach resort of Zipolite, in southern Oaxaca state, which has mandatory rules about face masks.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador called López-Gatell "a good public servant." Mexico has nearly 1.45 million coronavirus cases and 127,757 deaths.

"It's a good thing that there is this scrutiny, but a public servant has rights, too," said López Obrador.

Oaxaca state spokesman Francisco Vallejo said customers at restaurants are allowed to take off their masks when dining, and said the state's beaches, while regulated, were not closed.

Good Housekeeping

2020 was the year of the restaurant DIY meal kit. Here are 10 options to ring in 2021

By GARRETT SNYDER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

A year ago, the idea of ordering a take-out meal that required cooking at home might have seemed unusual, or at least unnecessary. Wasn't avoiding the kitchen what restaurants were invented for anyway?

But as the pandemic transformed our relationship with our kitchens, chefs adapted to a new set of customers who were tired of takeout and eager to re-create (or at least attempt to re-create) the restaurant experience at home. Even once the COVID-19 wave eventually resides, it seems likely that DIY meal kits will remain popular into 2021 and beyond.

So if you're looking to ring in the new year with a restaurant-esque experience that doesn't take place in a restaurant, consider unique options around L.A. that can be prepared at home.

Classic steakhouse fare at the Finishing Gourmet. Former Four Seasons chef and Bocuse d'Or head coach Robert Sulatycky and entrepreneur Paul Abramowitz recently launched a luxe delivery service that aims to re-create the fine dining steakhouse experience at home. Vacuum-sealed dry-aged ribeyes arrive seasoned and par-cooked; customers are tasked with searing them for a minute or two on a hot pan using the equipment provided, including tongs, a silicone brush, searing oil, herbs, finishing salt and a custom steak knife. Sides such as tortellini mac and cheese and jumbo shrimp cocktails arrive neatly garnished and plated in glass jars or ceramic bowls. Even the crème brûlée comes with a portable blowtorch for caramelizing the turbinado sugar on top. This experience isn't exactly cheap, however—entrées start around \$70, plus a \$30 delivery charge.

exploretock.com/thefinishinggourmet-la

Tamale kits at Guerrilla Tacos. Why not wrap up some tamales while you're wrapping up 2020? That's the idea behind Guerrilla Tacos' tamale kits, an expansion of the restaurant's popular "Emergency Taco Kits" that went viral back in March. The \$50 ta-



An at-home steak delivery from the Finishing Gourmet.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

male kit, which makes about 30 tamales, includes two pounds of ready-to-use masa, 40 corn husks and 1 pound each of steak, chicken and sweet potato and cheese fillings, plus a side of salsa. Sure, as anyone who has witnessed a tamaleada in action can tell you, wrapping and steaming a few dozen tamales isn't for the faint of heart, but the Guerrilla Tacos kit also includes instructions to guide you through any masa-related miscues.

guerrillatacos.com/tacokit

Alinea "Be the Chef" menu at Vespertine. Jordan Kahn has been serving elaborate themed takeout tasting menus at his Culver City restaurant Vespertine since the pandemic began, but his most recent installment might be the most hands-on production he's designed yet. Inspired by Kahn's time working at Chicago fine dining destination Alinea alongside chef Grant Achatz, the nine-course meal invites customers to intricately assemble their own versions of modernist dishes such as pear with celery leaf and curry or halibut with shellfish custard. "We give the basic instructions for preparation, but this is really [the guest's] chance to feel a little bit of what it's like to be a chef," Kahn recently told Forbes.

exploretock.com/vespertine

The Korean BBQ kit by Chris Oh. There's nothing that can quite replicate the feel of an epic soju-fueled barbecue feast in Koreatown, but former Hanjip chef Chris Oh's KBBQ delivery kits might be the

next best thing. Kits for two (\$60) or four people (\$100) include an option of marinated meats—kalbi, bulgogi or pork belly—plus rice, dipping sauces and a smattering of banchan. Soju bottles (original or grapefruit-flavored) are extra. And if you don't have a grill at home, you can also add a portable tabletop burner and grill pan to accompany your food.

kbbqkit.com

Char siu kit at Needle Silver Lake's new wave Cantonese spot Needle is offering a finish-at-home version of its popular char siu for \$33. Chef Ryan Wong vacuum-seals the slab of Snake River Farms Kurobuta pork belly so it stays juicy and tender; at home, the meat is warmed in simmering water, then broiled in the oven and finished with a sticky honey glaze and a sprinkle of salt. Served with steamed rice, greens and a dab of hot mustard, a few slices of char siu make for a simple but glorious dinner.

needlela.com

Black Truffle Risotto Kit at Redbird. Downtown restaurant Redbird is offering a holiday Black Truffle Risotto Kit that provides everything you need to master the famously finicky dish on your stove. The \$100 package serves four to six and includes risotto rice, white wine, mushroom stock, onion, butter, Parmesan and fresh black truffles. You'll also receive a prerecorded cooking demo from chef Neal Fraser, just in case written instructions won't cut it.

exploretock.com/redbirdla

Hand roll kits at Brothers Sushi. Many sushi restaurants began offering home hand roll kits this year, including the names you'd expect like Kazunori and Sogo Roll Bar. The spot with the deepest roster of options, however, might be Brothers Sushi in Studio City. There you'll find three tiers of hand roll kits, which range from \$35 to \$150: the most expensive makes up to 20 hand rolls and includes caviar, a box of sea urchin, chopped toro, salmon, yellowtail, spicy tuna, snow crab plus accompaniments such as cucumber, daikon sprouts and shiso leaves. Instructions for rolling are included, but don't expect to become a sushi master on your first (or second) try.

thebrotherssushi.com/diy-hand-roll-kit

Lobster roll kit at Found Oyster. Found Oyster in East Hollywood has reinvented itself several times in 2020—pivoting to a fried chicken joint and fresh seafood shop, for example—so it shouldn't be surprising that chef and co-owner Ari Kolender is serving up some great DIY kits to boot. A \$45 "New England" style lobster roll kit includes a heap of fresh Maine lobster, lobster bisque mayo, diced serrano, lemon and Martin's top-split potato buns (as any lobster roll devotee will tell you, toasting the buns with butter is a crucial first step). There's also a steamed littleneck clam kit (\$22) that pairs perfectly with fresh bread or pasta; video cooking instructions are fea-

tured on the restaurant's Instagram page.
foundoyster.com

Garlic knot kit at Milo & Olive. DIY pizza kits—essentially a ball of proofed dough paired with marinara, mozzarella and topping—have become a standard menu option for several top-tier pizzerias around town, including Ronan, Roberta's, Jon & Vinny's and Grá. At Milo & Olive in Santa Monica, you can also add a side of take-and-bake garlic knots (\$13) to your basket along with pizza. The pre-rolled and stuffed bundles come with a side of garlic oil (for brushing) and tomato

sauce (for dipping).
miloandolive.com

Cook-at-home taco kits at Holbox. Gilberto Cetina Jr.'s acclaimed Mexican seafood spot inside Mercado La Paloma is taking a well-deserved vacation until Jan. 3, but once it returns will offer "cook-at-home" taco kits featuring a choice of Baja kanpachi, Maine diver scallops or Spanish octopus. The seafood comes par-cooked and once seared is ready to be arranged on handmade corn tortillas along with toppings such as cherry tomato pico de gallo, red cabbage and chile X'catic sauce. Each kit (\$27 to \$30) makes six tacos.

Design Recipes: 10 quick ways to refresh your home in 2021

By CATHY HOBBS
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Looking for ways to give your home a new look in the new year? Start with quick, easy refreshing techniques that won't break the bank. Whether you are looking to redo an entire room or elevate certain areas of your space, here are some great tricks of the trade to help get you started.

1 Paint. Nothing refreshes a space or can give it a new look quicker, easier and less expensively than paint.

2 Reupholster or slipcover. No need to toss the sofa or chair that may have started to look a bit worn around the edges. Instead have it reupholstered, or add a slipcover.

3 Refinish. Love a great flea market find? Why not take an old piece and repurpose or refinish it?

4 Add a chandelier or ceiling pendant. In rooms that are heavily used or may not get much light, adding a ceiling fixture can help give an

instant focal point and lift.

5 Swap out or add a new rug. Not sure what to choose? Why not consider a nontraditional alternative such as shag or even an indoor/outdoor rug with a bold graphic print.

6 Consider swapping in portable design options such as accessories, toss pillows and throws. These items can add new color and texture to a space that can easily be used to give a room an affordable face lift.

7 Consider textured material such as faux fur and hides.

8 Bring in mirrors. Mirrors can help make small rooms larger and reflect light differently in a space.

9 Go homemade. What would be more special than making something yourself?

10 Shop your house. Instead of bringing anything new into your home, consider moving an item to a different room or finally framing that piece of art that has been collecting dust in the garage.



An affordable indoor/outdoor rug adds graphic interest to this living space.

CATHY HOBBS/TNS

Life & Style

Ted Danson and Holly Hunter combine for comedy 'Mr. Mayor'

NEW YORK

(AP)—There's a government office right there in the very title of Ted Danson's new series, but the new NBC comedy "Mr. Mayor" is anything but political.

"If you consider politics the headlines in the papers and the breaking news on CNN, that ain't us," said Danson, who stars as Los Angeles mayor Neil Bremer.

"We point out the foibles and silliness, and wonderfully lovable, pathetic, lame side of humanity but we don't stop and preach. We never are preaching."

The show is from Emmy Award-winners Robert Carlock and Tina Fey, the brains behind "30 Rock" and "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt."

The 30-minute comedy takes over the 8 p.m. anchor slot in NBC's Thursday comedy block starting Thursday. Danson considers the show more an office or family comedy.

Danson plays a businessman who made a fortune on billboards and then retired. He ran for mayor just to impress his daughter, a sophomore in high school played by Kyla Kenedy from "The Walking Dead."

The new mayor is not a very polished political figure, prone to mangling Spanish and saying things like "I'm very open to a robot police force."

He's got a dubious staff behind him—the trio of comedians Bobby Moynihan, Vella Lovell and Mike Cabelon—and a chief rival in Holly Hunter, who plays an ultra-liberal councilmember. "Like underwear bought in a drug store, you're not going to last two



Danson

months," she warns the mayor.

In the first episode, the mayor, hoping for a winning issue, steals the idea of a plastic drinking straw ban from his daughter and it blows up in his face. Hunter's character offers to help—but only if he will rename coyotes as "mini-wolves." There is satire, but nothing that might pit red states against blue ones.

"Immediately, I think the audience is alerted to the fact that we're not going to be dissecting the Trump administration," said Hunter. "This is not some new angle on a political conversation."

Danson—a veteran TV star of such shows as "Cheers," "Becker" and "The Good Place"—hadn't worked with Hunter, the Oscar-winner for "The Piano" and star of the TNT drama series "Saving Grace." The two instantly clicked, a pair of show biz pros.

"There are some benefits to having been around for a while, which is there is a relaxation and a recognition of, 'Oh, I'm in good hands. This other person's got me,'" Danson said.

The cast and crew have endured a lot during the pandemic. They shot three episodes until production had to shut down for nine months. The cast kept in contact during the hiatus, even going over scripts virtually.

"We had jam sessions Zooming together and I think in a way that created a certain feeling of tightness," Hunter said. "We would just read a new script just to hear it between us. You know, it formed

a different kind of bond."

When they all reunited, a TV set designed for a fast-paced, whacky comedy now had real-world boundaries—face masks and shields, social distancing, daily COVID-19 tests and van rides that held only one actor.

"It's all very different. They're a little bit sad, a little bit lonely because the kids don't get to rush into the playground and embrace each other because we're so happy to be working," Danson said.

Tanya Roberts, Bond girl and '70s Show' star, hospitalized

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Tanya Roberts, who captivated James Bond in "A View to a Kill" and later played Midge Pinciotti in the sitcom "That '70s Show," has been hospitalized after falling at her home. The actor had mistakenly been reported dead by her publicist earlier Monday.

Roberts' publicist Mike Pingel later told The Associated Press Monday afternoon that Roberts, 65, was still alive as of 10 a.m. PST but was in a poor condition. He had said earlier Monday that Roberts collapsed

Larry King, hospitalized with COVID-19, moved out of ICU

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Veteran talk show host Larry King, suffering from COVID-19, has been moved out of the intensive care unit at a Los Angeles hospital and is breathing on his own, a spokesman said on Monday.

King was moved to the ICU on New Year's Eve and

was receiving oxygen but is now breathing on his own, said David Theall, a spokesman for Ora Media, a production company formed by King.

The 87-year-old broadcasting legend shared a video phone call with his three sons,



King

Theall said.

King, who spent many years as an overnight radio DJ, is best known as host of the "Larry King Live" interview show that ran in prime time on CNN from 1985 to 2010.

in her home on Dec. 24 and was admitted to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where she was believed to have died on Sunday.

Pingel said Roberts' partner, Lance O'Brien, told him that he held his wife and she "seemed for him to slip away."

O'Brien, who'd been unable to see Roberts in the hospital because of COVID-19 restrictions, was allowed to visit Sunday for a last good-



Roberts

bye, Pingel said. The actor does not have the virus, he said.

The publicist said he is awaiting further updates on Roberts' condition.

Multiple media outlets, including the AP, reported Roberts' death. The AP removed its obituary and sent an advisory noting that the actor was still alive.

One of Roberts' highest profile roles was playing geologist Stacey Sutton opposite

Roger Moore in 1985's "A View to a Kill."

Roberts also appeared in such fantasy adventure films as "The Beastmaster" and "Hearts and Armour." She replaced Shelley Hack in "Charlie's Angels," joining Jaclyn Smith and Cheryl Ladd as third Angel Julie. She also played comic book heroine Sheena—a female version of the Tarzan story—in a 1984 film.

A new generation of fans saw her on "That '70s Show," playing Midge, mother to Laura Prepon's character Donna.

Trebek urges support for COVID-19 victims in 1 of last shows

NEW YORK (AP)—In a message taped for what turned out to be his final week as "Jeopardy!" host, Alex Trebek urged the game show's viewers to honor the season of giving by helping victims of the coronavirus epidemic.

Trebek's plea aired in the opening moments of the show that aired on Monday.

"We're trying to build a gentler, kinder society and if we all pitch in just a little bit, we're going to get there," he said.

Trebek died November 8 at age 80 of pancreatic cancer but had pre-taped several weeks of shows that have continued to air. Monday's show began the final week of programs that he left behind.

His last week of shows were originally scheduled to air on Christmas week; two categories of clues on Monday were "December 21" and "Christmas



Trebek

on Broadway." But to give Trebek's final week wider exposure, "Jeopardy!" put them off until this week.

The show's executive producer, Mike Richards, told NBC's "Today" show on Monday that

Trebek was "an absolute warrior" in his last taping sessions.

"He was in enormous pain," Richards said. "He was, you know, 10 days away from pass-

ing away. And you will not sense that in any of these episodes."

A successor hasn't been named. Longtime "Jeopardy!" champion Ken Jennings will be the first of a planned series of guest hosts on episodes that begin appearing next week.

Asked whether Trebek had given any suggestions about a successor, Richards told NBC that "he mentioned a couple of names but he wanted to stay out of that ... No one is going to replace him, and he knew that."

Wife grapples with family's history of sexual dysfunction

DEAR ABBY: When my husband and I were first married, I had no idea why his mother and sisters were so hostile. When they started treating our children the same way, my husband finally addressed the issue. We moved out of town, and he finally told me that when he was in his teens and early 20s, he had had sex with all of them, which was why they didn't like me.

After an estrangement of many years, he has now started talking to his mother and sisters again. His mother is now in her 70s. It breaks my heart that he is talking to people he had sex with, but he says it is OK because they are "family." In my opinion, he should have nothing to do with them. Please tell me how I need to handle things.

"ALL IN THE FAMILY"

DEAR "ALL IN": You cannot control what another adult does. I sympathize with your feelings, and I agree your husband's family situation was beyond unhealthy. However, from what you wrote, I get the impression that you would be equally upset if he were talking with ex-girlfriends. If your husband wants to talk to his relatives, he's going to do it regardless of whether or not you find it threatening. My question to you would be, are you willing to tolerate it?

DEAR ABBY: My girlfriend suffers from depression. She says she loves me, but there are times she won't contact me for days because of it. During this most recent bout of depression, she hasn't talked to me for a month.

I finally got fed up. I told her the next time she talks to me it should either be a breakup call or to give me an apology. Was I right to say that? I don't know what to do.

UNSURE IN THE EAST

DEAR UNSURE: You say your girlfriend suffers from depression. Is she under the care of a doctor and receiving treatment for it? Is her family aware of the fact that when she cycles down she is incommunicado? If she's so incapacitated that she can't communicate, they should be notified so she can get the professional help she needs, including an adjustment in her medications if necessary.

I agree she owes you an apology, and I can't fault you for telling her. But I would not recommend mentioning breaking up while she's in a vulnerable mental state.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 55-year-old successful businesswoman who has fallen in love with a man who has nothing. I would have to support him completely in retirement, but he is so lovable, so kind and so much fun. He does bring me great joy and happiness. What should I do—stay with him and take on the

DEAR ABBY

By **ABIGAIL VAN BUREN**
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



burden of his finances or just keep moving?

EYE TO THE FUTURE IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR EYE: You are a 55-year-old successful businesswoman. I assume you are asking me whether you should marry this man or not, even though you find him lovable, kind and fun to be with. People have valuable assets to offer besides money. However, before you make any trips to the altar, I suggest you have a chat with your attorney, just in case your assessment of him should change after the wedding.

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more sociable person, order "How to Be Popular." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

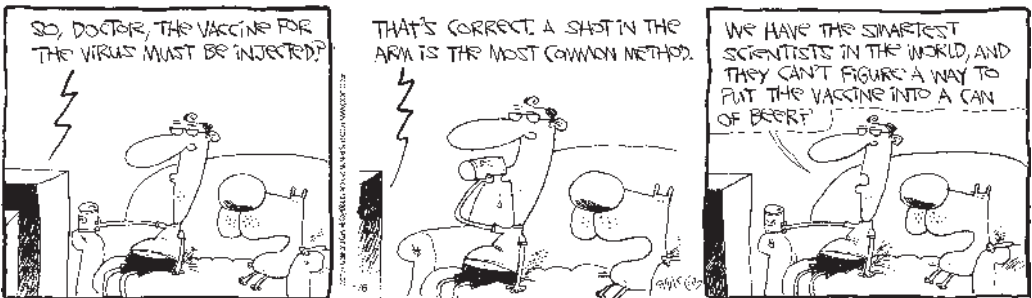
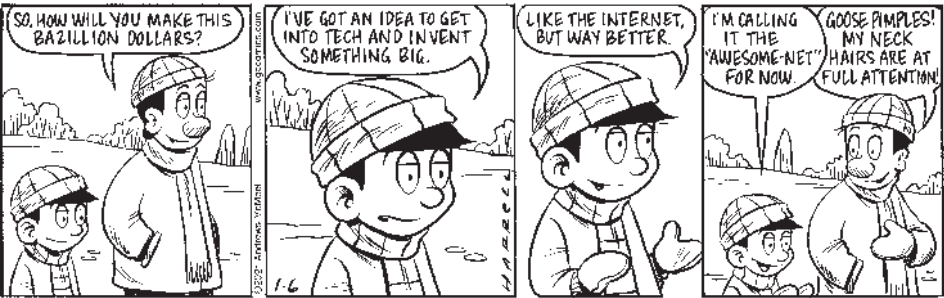


Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Binge

4 Release money

8 Unravel

12 "Hail!"

13 — Major

14 Fury

15 Record holder?

16 Tenderizing sauces

18 Work dough

20 Spigot

21 Borscht base

24 Long stories

28 Waterfalls

32 Beige

33 Tennis feat

34 — di

36 Shoe width

37 Walkway

39 Game with hand signals

41 Bygone Ford

43 Urban haze

44 Young fellow

46 Say out loud

50 Lover's songs

55 Filch

56 "Let's go!"

57 Chantilly, e.g.

58 Half of bi-

59 "The Music Man" setting

60 Altar vows

61 Curvy letter

DOWN

1 Mr. Frost

2 Bard's river

3 Actor Hackman

4 Unfair treatment

5 Notre Dame's

55 Filch Par-seghian

56 "Let's go!"

57 Chantilly, e.g.

58 Half of bi-

59 "The Music Man" setting

60 Altar vows

61 Curvy letter

23 Computer pros

25 Chilled

26 Manitoba tribe

27 Goes a-court-ing?

28 Super-hero's garment

29 Military sch.

30 Collec-tions

31 "The King and I" locale

35 Stirs up

38 Montana's capital

40 Sales rep.

42 PC linkup

45 Surrealist Salvador

47 Loyal

48 Billions of years

49 Baseball stats

50 Biol. or chem.

51 Comic Philips

52 Tier

53 Pop

54 Green prefix

Solution time: 23 mins.

Yesterday's answer 1-6

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Kate McKinnon, 37; Julie Chen, 51; Gabrielle Reece, 51; Rowan Atkinson, 66.

Happy Birthday: Organize your time and stay on top of your deadlines. Do your best to get along with others, regardless of your differences. A positive attitude will encourage others to compromise. Less emotion and more strategy will lead to good results. Take good care of your health, wealth and relationships. Make love a priority. Stop dreaming and start doing. Your numbers are 3, 16, 22, 26, 34, 41, 45.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Don't linger; connect with people who can help you achieve your objective. Refuse to let an emotional situation get blown out of proportion. Size up what's going on, then offer a fair solution. Anger solves nothing; be prepared to compromise. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Expect to face opposition if you voice your opinion. Have your facts straight, and remember to use diplomacy if you want to get things done. Acting in haste will lead to uncertainty. Don't let your emotions take over. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Physical activity will be challenging if you compete with someone who doesn't play fair. Consider what you are up against and whether it's in your best interest. Don't agree to a change that hinders your chance to advance. *****

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Emotions will run high when dealing with family matters. Put your ego aside and look at the facts. You'll come up with a unique solution

that will appease everyone involved. Joint finances or ventures will lead to problems. Physical fitness will ease stress. **

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Keep your life simple. The less you interact with others, the easier it will be to get things done. Focus on home improvements that allow you to incorporate a work-from-home station to bring in additional funds. Romance is on the rise. ****

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Emotional purchases will cause more stress than comfort. Refuse to let anyone talk you into something that is risky or that might put you in debt. Spend more time taking care of your financial, physical and emotional well-being. Don't fold under pressure. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Charm will help you defer someone's attempts to put demands on you. Offer solutions in place of bailing someone out physically or financially. Pay more attention to what you want and changes that will ensure better health and less stress. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): A change of heart will cause short-term uncertainty. Take a step back, and you will discover what you can do to turn around a situation that is bothering you. An adjustment at home will lead to greater freedom. Honesty and facts matter. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Check in with someone you have collaborated with successfully, and you will be offered options that pique your interest. Before you promise to participate, consider how it will affect your personal life. Act on reason, not emotions. ****

EUGENIA LAST THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

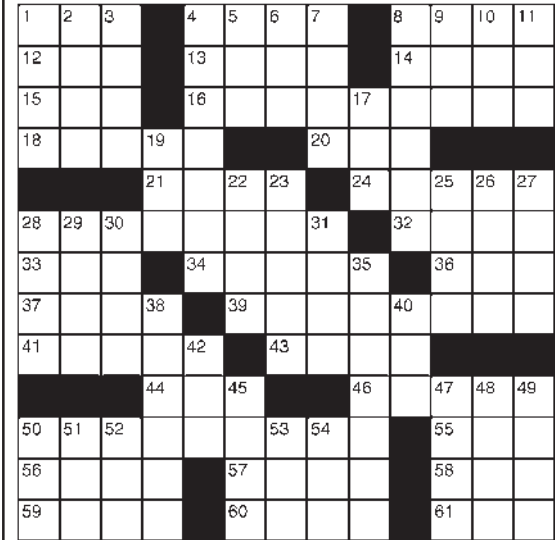
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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Take a moment to evaluate situations before letting your emotions take over. It's essential to understand the ramifications if you act in haste. Use discretion when discussing matters with a friend, relative or peer. Pay close attention to detail. **

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Take pride in what you do. You'll gain support if you think for yourself instead of following someone's lead. Put your time and effort into making a difference, and you will get ahead. Let your intuition guide you. *****

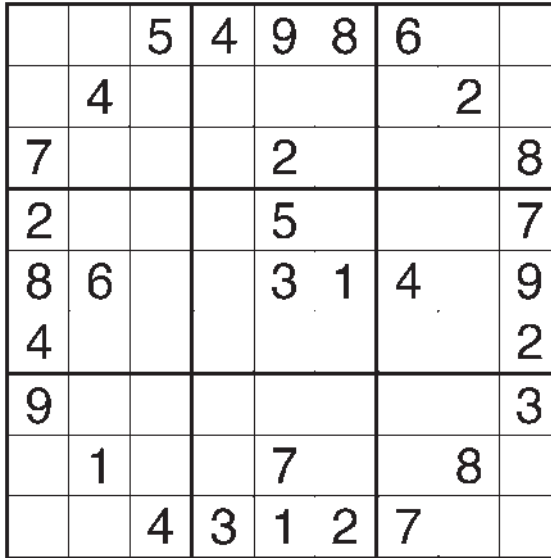
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Stick to the people you know and trust. Someone competitive will try to make you look bad. Stay alert and concentrate on your responsibilities. Shared expenses will lead to uncertainty. Set rules to protect against loss. Don't pay for someone's mistake. ***

Birthday Baby: You are playful, entertaining and sensitive. You are demanding and proactive. Visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn. Copyright 2021 Andrews McMeel Syndication



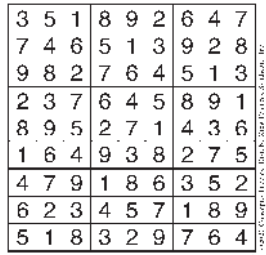
SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green



Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer



Difficulty Level *** 1/06 ©2012 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

I NEED A MANICURE Solution: 7 letters

M P C I L Y R C A H T L A E H
A O L R E L C I T U C B T H A
S L I C E A L A V O U N C S N
S I P S L A S T A F I U E U D
A S P L T E M T F K T Y T R S
G H E A C U A E S S T R O B F
E H R R S A R N C U I N S P N
S L S O P D R I A M O S P H E
H L I L I E T E Z I Y R D I T
A L I F T S B S T E R E E N F
P E M A I I O O O T R Y I E O
E T W T N G L V L A I A E F S
S S R L E N G T H D P L U R P
A A R T I F I C I A L L G Q A
B P O I N T Y S S O L G E L S

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Acrylic, Artificial, Artistic, Base, Beauty, Bold, Brush, Buffer, Care, Clean, Clippers, Coat, Cream, Cuticle, Cuts, Design, Dry, File, Floral, French, Full, Gels, Glitter, Glossy, Hands, Health, Last, Layers, Length, Lotion, Massage, Moisturize, Nails, Oval, Paint, Pasty, Pointy, Polish, Protect, Shape, Shellac, Shine, Skin, Soap, Soften, Spas, Square, Tips, Trim, Water

Yesterday's Answer: Stimulation
Treasures 24 through 42 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Luka looks fine, lifts Mavs over Rockets



HOUSTON (AP)—Luka Doncic had 33 points, 16 rebounds and 11 assists, and Tim Hardaway Jr. added 30 off the bench as the Dallas Mavericks used a big fourth quarter run to pull away in a 113-100 win over the Houston Rockets on Monday night.

Dallas was on top by 3 with about seven minutes remaining before using a 14-3 spurt, with seven points from Hardaway, to extend the lead to 106-92 with about 2½ minutes remaining.

Houston couldn't get anything going as the Mavericks took over. The Rockets missed five shots and had two turnovers in that span.

Hardaway, who made 8 of 10 3-point attempts, added another 3-pointer down the stretch to put the game out of reach.

Dallas coach Rick Carlisle changed his starting lineup to get more size against the Rockets and moved Willie Cauley-Stein, who is 7 feet tall, in for Hardaway for the first time this season.

Carlisle heaped praise upon Hardaway for the way he played off the bench.

"It was a really strong character performance by Tim," he said. "He was great at both ends of the floor... Tim Hardaway showed what class and professionalism is in responding to a lineup change."

Hardaway didn't feel like the move was that big of a deal.

"You've got to be a pro," he said. "I'm here to help this team out any way I can. I just had to make sure I was ready when I got in the game to make an impact."

Christian Wood had 23 points to lead the Rockets and James Harden added 21.

"We were way too stagnant, didn't move the ball enough to put pressure on them and make it hard on them," coach Stephen Silas said.

Both Doncic and Harden were back after sitting out in their team's last game with injuries. Doncic returned after missing Sunday's loss to Chicago with a bruised quadriceps. Harden played against the Kings because of a sprained ankle.

Carlisle was impressed that his team was able to slow Harden down and limit the Rockets to just 100 points.

The Mavericks led by seven points to start the fourth before Houston opened the quarter with an 8-1 run to tie it with about 10 minutes remaining. Eric Gordon made three free throws to get things going and Sterling Brown had a 3 that tied it.

Dallas had a 16-point lead after a three-point play by



Dallas Mavericks Luka Doncic takes a shot against the Houston Rockets during the first quarter of an NBA game Monday, Jan. 4, 2021, in Houston.

stretched the lead to 35.

76ers 118, Hornets 101

Joel Embiid had 14 points and 11 rebounds, Tobias Harris scored 22 points and Philadelphia beat Charlotte for its fourth straight win.

The Sixers swept the two-game set necessitated on the schedule this season because of the pandemic and beat the Hornets for the 13th straight time. Philadelphia has not lost to Charlotte since Nov. 2, 2016.

Ben Simmons was steady with 12 points and 10 rebounds, and Danny Green hit three 3s for 13 points for Philadelphia.

Magic 103, Cavaliers 83

Aaron Gordon broke out of a shooting slump with 6-of-9 sniping from 3-point range and scored a season-high 24 points, leading Orlando over Cleveland.

Orlando snapped a two-game losing streak that had followed four straight victories to open the season. The Magic made a season-high 15 3-pointers, easily surpassing their previous season high of 11.

Nikola Vucevic scored 23 points and grabbed eight rebounds, while Terrence Ross chipped in 15 points off the bench for the Magic.

Pacers 118, Pelicans 116, OT

Malcolm Brogdon capped a 21-point, 11-assist performance by bouncing in a driving, one-handed floater with 1.7 seconds left in overtime, and Indiana beat New Orleans.

Victor Oladipo scored 25 points for Indiana, hitting a 29-foot 3-pointer and following that up with a steal from Lonzo Ball to spark a six-point comeback in the final 20 seconds of regulation.

Brandon Ingram scored 31 points and Zion Williamson added 24 points and 10 rebounds for New Orleans.

Warriors 137, Kings 106

Stephen Curry followed up his career-high 62 points a night earlier with another 30 points, nine rebounds and eight assists to lead suddenly clicking Golden State past Sacramento.

At 92 points over the past two nights, Curry posted his third-highest point total over a two-game span, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. He scored 97 combined on Feb. 25 and 27, 2016, and 93 on Feb. 24-25, '16.

Durant sidelined due to COVID-19 protocol

NEW YORK (AP)—Brooklyn Nets forward Kevin Durant will not play in Tuesday's game against the Utah Jazz in compliance with the NBA's COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

The Nets announced the news on Monday.

The team did not provide any more details on Durant's status. The Nets star has not addressed the news.

Durant announced in March that he contracted COVID-19. Monday's news does not mean that he

has tested positive again. It means that he has triggered a clause in the NBA's 134-page manual outlining the league's health and safety protocols for the new season being played outside of a bubble.

For example, several Houston Rockets players, including John Wall and DeMarcus Cousins, were forced to quarantine at the outset of the season after reportedly gathering for haircuts in an apartment where some of the players present either tested positive or returned inconclu-

sive tests. James Harden was also placed in quarantine for attending a "private indoor party" without a mask.

How long will Durant be out?

The Athletic's Shams Charania reported that Durant is expected to require seven days of quarantine because of contact tracing and potential exposure. Assuming that seven-day window starts on Monday, that means Durant will also miss upcoming games against the Philadelphia 76ers, Mem-

phis Grizzlies and Oklahoma City Thunder.

The Nets are off to a 3-4 start in Durant's first season with the team. Durant has played in six of those games and is averaging 28.2 points, seven rebounds and 4.8 assists while shooting 51.4 percent from the field and 45.5 percent from 3-point distance.

Durant missed all of last season after suffering an Achilles tear during the 2019 NBA Finals as a member of the Golden State Warriors.

Bucks 125, Pistons 115

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 43 points and Milwaukee defeated Detroit and moved above the .500 mark for the first time this season.

The reigning two-time MVP scored 30 points by half-time, shot 17 of 24 from the floor overall and finished with nine rebounds.

The Bucks (4-3) have won their last eight regular-season meetings with the Pistons, which represents the longest streak for either team in the history of the series.

Knicks 113, Hawks 108

Julius Randle scored 28 points and grabbed 17 rebounds, Austin Rivers hit a huge 3-pointer and New York rallied to beat Atlanta.

Taking their second straight home loss after a 4-1 start to the season, the Hawks squandered a 13-point lead early in

the second half and faded in the closing minutes.

RJ Barrett had 26 points and 11 rebounds, and Immanuel Quickley scored 16 for the Knicks.

Trae Young had 31 points and 14 assists for the Hawks.

Heat 118, Thunder 90

Kelly Olynyk made five 3-pointers on his way to 19 points, Bam Adebayo led all scorers with 20 on 9-for-10 shooting and Miami beat Oklahoma City.

Miami has played six games, alternating losses then wins in all six, and has used a different starting five every time.

Jimmy Butler scored 18 points for Miami, which used a 20-0 third quarter run to turn what was a four-point game into a runaway. Olynyk had 11 points in that spurt, including three 3-pointers, and the Heat

Doncic with about eight minutes left in the third quarter. The Rockets then scored the next 14 points to get within 72-70 four minutes later. Harden had a step back 3-pointer in that stretch and Jae'Sean Tate capped it with six straight points.

Doncic struggled during that time, turning the ball over three times and receiving a technical foul.

The Mavericks finally ended a scoring drought with a 3-pointer by Hardaway with less than three minutes left in the quarter.

Another 3-pointer by Hardaway later in the third extended the lead to six points before Gordon hit a 3 for Houston. But Doncic scored the last four points of the quarter to put the Mavericks up 84-77 entering the fourth.

DeMarcus Cousins was ejected after receiving two technical fouls in about three

minutes in the second quarter. The first one came when he and Cauley-Stein both got one after jawing at each other after fighting for a rebound.

Cousins was ejected when he yelled at an official after not getting a foul call after a layup with about nine minutes left in the first half.

Celtics 126, Raptors 114

Jayson Tatum scored 40 points and the Boston Celtics rolled to a win over the Toronto Raptors.

Playing without three of their top guards, the Celtics shook off a slow start to lead by as many as 26 points in the second half. They shot 48.8% overall.

Tatum turned the game around with 21 points in the second quarter. He hit five 3-pointers and converted all 13 free throws, finishing one point short of his career high set against New Orleans last January.

Playoffs: Powerhouses, pretenders, and a 7-9 team



NEW YORK (AP)—From the rested in Kansas City and Pittsburgh to the relieved in Cleveland, Chicago and Los Angeles, the field for the Super Bowl chase is set. There are some powerhouses and some pretenders — and a team with a losing record.

The reigning Super Bowl champion Chiefs (14-2) and Green Bay (13-3) earned each conference's lone bye in the expanded playoffs. And no, adding a third wild-card entrant is not why a 7-9 club will be playing next weekend. Washington "earned" that spot by winning the abysmal NFC East that displayed in the finale of the regular season why NFC Least has been so appropriate a moniker.

So while New York Giants fans scream that Eagles coach Doug Pederson didn't truly play to beat Washington on Sunday night, it should emphasized that the Giants went 6-10, a record more in line with relegation than reward.

Besides, coach Ron Rivera dealing with skin cancer and quarterback Alex Smith returning from an injury that nearly cost him his leg, those are redemptive and rewarding plots.

"This one's special just because of how hard it was," Rivera said. "How tough everything was, how it's been on the guys, the organization. There's a great group of young men in there and we're trying to do things the right way. It's really a cool thing to come out and get the division."

As for the spoils, here's who plays next weekend and how it might look.

Indianapolis (11-5) at Buffalo (13-3)

Frank Reich has been a hero in Western New York since engineering the great comeback in NFL history while replacing the injured Jim Kelly in a 1992 opening-round matchup with the Houston Oilers. Reich now coaches the Colts, and he'll remain heroic in Buffalo if they go quietly against what has been the league's most impressive team the last month.

This might be Colts QB Philip Rivers' final game, but it's the Indy defense that must stand tall here. That's a tall order the way Josh Allen, Stefon Diggs and the Bills are going.

Los Angeles Rams (10-6) at Seattle (12-4)

A third go-around for the NFC West rivals who split during the regular season. Both have strong defenses and have been spotty on offense, LA far more so than Seattle.

The Rams clinched their spot in the playoffs without



Washington Football Team's Alex Smith (11) is tackled by Philadelphia Eagles' Malik Jackson (97) during the second half of an NFL game, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021, in Philadelphia. AP

the inconsistent Jared Goff (thumb surgery) at quarterback. The Seahawks have no issues at that position with Russell Wilson, though his first half of the season was far better than the last two months.

Tampa Bay (11-5) at Washington (7-9)

For sure, the Washington story is uplifting, particularly the way Rivera is leading a change in culture for a franchise so desperately needing it. And the last three teams to capture division titles without a winning record also pulled off upsets in the wild-card round.

Don't look for much of that in prime time, not with Tom Brady leading the Buccaneers, who are balanced enough to threaten anyone. You remember Brady. If not, tune in to this one and see him likely dismantle Washington's impressive but inexperienced defense.

Tennessee (11-5) at Baltimore (11-5)

A year ago, the Titans rode Derrick Henry's rushing power, agility and underrated speed to a stunning upset in Baltimore. They still are riding Henry, who became the eighth player to gain 2,000 yards on the ground in a season. Tennessee also can throw the ball better than it could last season.

Alas, the Titans barely play any defense. So, with the Ravens having a more diverse but just as effective running game and a sturdy D—not to mention the memories of that beatdown last January—Henry and Co. have an even bigger task ahead in Baltimore this time.

Chicago (8-8) at New Orleans (12-4)

The other NFC interloper, perhaps, the Bears almost belong in the Least, uh, East. They went from 5-1 to 5-7 before

finishing strongly enough to sneak in. Their defense is dangerous if not quite Monsters of the Midway, and when they run the ball well, they can compete.

If the Saints get some of their running backs back from the COVID-19 list—particularly scoring machine Alvin Kamara—they will be heavily favored. This could be Drew Brees' last shot at a second NFL title, too. And New Orleans has a defense to match Chicago's.

Cleveland (11-5) at Pittsburgh (12-4)

This had to be the topper for the weekend's action. One of the grand rivalries of the sport, and it was just played out in Week 17—albeit with the Steelers resting a bunch of regulars. Yet Pittsburgh pushed Cleveland to the limit before the Browns snapped the league's longest playoff drought, dating to 2003.

Can the Browns win again in the wild-card matchup? Sure, as long as they get their ample running game going and don't have another COVID-19 outbreak like the one that hit in the last two weeks.

The Steelers have lost four of their last five, but they also have won 17 straight at home against Cleveland. Ben Roethlisberger will be back and he's 23-2-1 in his career against the Browns.

Yankees, Red Sox interested in Puig

NEW YORK—The Yankees are reportedly interested in free agent outfielder Yasiel Puig, according to Mark Feinsand.

Puig has not played since 2019 - he was set to join the Atlanta Braves prior to the start of Summer Camp, but after a positive COVID-19 test, the deal was off.

The Yankees are among five teams interested in Puig, along with the Boston Red Sox, Houston Astros, Miami Marlins, and Baltimore Orioles.

Puig took MLB by storm early in his career after defecting from Cuba, slashing .305/.386/.502 in his first two years, where he was an All-Star and finished in second place in the 2013 NL Rookie of the Year voting. Since then, Puig owns a .792 OPS.

The Yankees starting outfield seems fill, with Clint Frazier, Aaron Hicks, and Aaron Judge presumably manning the outfield from left to right, but depth is a question mark. With Giancarlo Stanton seemingly a full-time DH, and Brett Gardner on the free agent market, Mike Tauchman is their fourth outfielder.

Estevan Florial is on the 40-man roster, but played in just one MLB game last year.

Puig could provide not only outfield depth, but with Stanton's health always a question mark, he could presumably be a back-up DH.

3 teams eyeing Hendriks

Meanwhile, the hot stove, at least as it pertains to Liam Hendriks, appears to be heating up.

Hendriks, the top closer on the free-agent market, still has the eye of the White Sox, who are reportedly among the teams interested in the All-Star ninth-inning man. So, too, however are the World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers, as well as the Toronto Blue Jays, who reportedly hosted Hendriks on a visit to their spring training facility Monday in Florida.

FanSided's Robert Murray reported the White Sox interest, as well as that of the Dodgers, who are fresh off snapping their championship drought in 2020. SportsNet's Shi Davidi wrote on Hendriks' visit to the Blue Jays'

complex in Dunedin, Florida. Hendriks pitched for the Blue Jays in 2014 and 2015. The Blue Jays have been a frequently mentioned club this winter, said to be one of the more aggressive teams chasing top free-agent outfielder George Springer.

The White Sox were also recently said to have "stayed in touch" with Alex Colomé, another one of the top relief arms on the free-agent market and their closer the past two seasons. Interest in both Hendriks and Colomé could signal the White Sox desire to add a dependable, veteran ninth-inning man to their 2021 bullpen, not a bad idea as it would allow their fleet of talented relief pitchers to continue in the roles they had success in last season.

That said, general manager Rick Hahn mentioned earlier this offseason that the team recognizes that it has internal options to turn to should a new closer be necessary. That group would figure to be headlined by Aaron Bummer, who received a long-term contract extension last spring, but also includes Evan Marshall, Codi Heuer, Matt Foster and others, perhaps even rookie fireballer Garrett Crochet.

Even after the White Sox traded for Lance Lynn, who has been one of the finest starting pitchers in baseball the past two seasons, a certain segment of the fan base craves another splashy addition this winter. Hendriks would certainly fit that bill. He's been one of the top closers in baseball the past couple of years, saving a combined 39 games and posting a 1.79 ERA in 2019 and 2020 with the Oakland Athletics. The White Sox got an up-close look at exactly what Hendriks can do, when he blew away three of the four South Side hitters he faced in the decisive Game 3 of the American League Wild Card Series in October.

Hendriks, who can light up the radar gun, was an All Star in 2019 and finished ninth in the AL Cy Young vote in 2020. If he joined the White Sox, their pitching staff would boast four of the top nine finishers in that vote: Dallas Keuchel finished fifth, Lynn sixth, Lucas Giolito seventh and Hendriks ninth.

Djokovic, Nadal set to return for 2nd ATP Cup

SYDNEY (AP)—ATP Cup champion Novak Djokovic and runner-up Rafael Nadal are set to return for the season-opening men's team tennis event starting Feb. 1, but the United States will be missing because of a change in format that has halved the field.

The inaugural event last year featured 24 teams and was played in three Australian cities, with Djokovic's Serbia team beating Nadal and Spain in the final at Sydney's Ken Rosewall Arena.

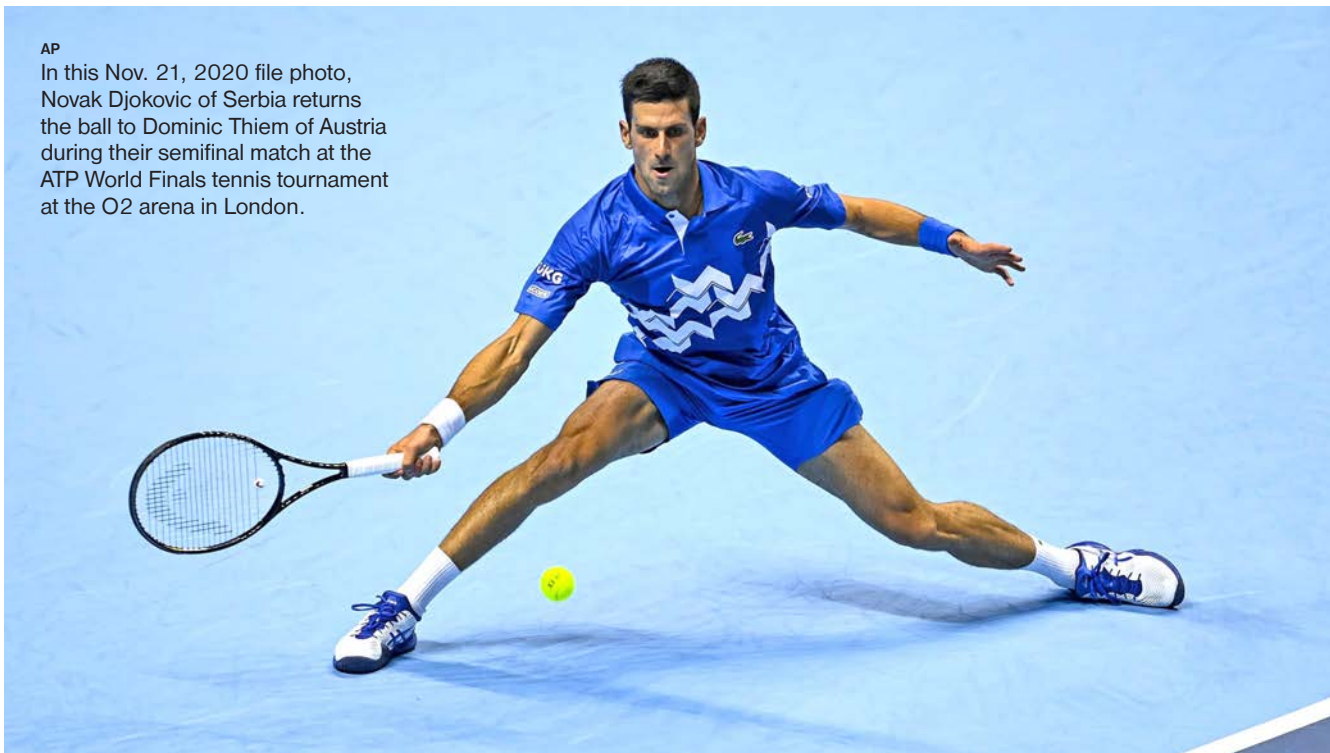
The Feb. 1-5 second edition will involve 12 teams and be played entirely at Melbourne Park amid COVID-19 restrictions, along with WTA and ATP tournaments, in the week leading into the Australian Open.

The draw will be held Jan. 20, with teams divided into four groups. The winner of each round-robin group will advance to the semifinals.

Qualification for the ATP Cup was based on the ranking of each country's top player, with Australia included on a wildcard entry. Other competing countries include



AP
In this Nov. 21, 2020 file photo, Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns the ball to Dominic Thiem of Austria during their semifinal match at the ATP World Finals tennis tournament at the O2 arena in London.



CAMACHO

From Page 20

and was followed by Borja, Brooklynn, and Skylar.

In the Expert Open race, Shane Alvarez was the first overall finisher and also topped the dirt bike category.

Alvarez took the first three

of the eight-lap race and after losing the next four, he came from behind and won the last to prevail in the division. Angelo Hernaez and Alvarez's brother, Alverick, completed the Top 3, while Franklin Santos, Christian Camacho, and Melvin Cepeda also joined the race.



JOSEPH CHIN

Brooklynn Susulin, left, and Skylar Togawa race in the Pee wee Class 1 during the Marianas Racing Association Series 6 last Sunday at the CowTown Raceway in Marpi.

Austria, Russia, Greece, Germany, Argentina, Italy, Japan, France and Canada.

All players arriving in Melbourne for the Australian Open will be required to quarantine for 14 days before the delayed start of the season's first major. The Australian Open is usually staged in the last two weeks of January, but has been pushed back to Feb. 8-21 because of travel and other restrictions in place for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Qualifying for the men's singles draw will take place in Doha, Qatar and for the women's in Dubai, both from Jan. 10-13.

As with other sports, the international tennis calendar was disrupted in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, including the postponement of the French Open's start from May to September, and the cancella-

tion of Wimbledon for the first time since World War II.

Quarantine issues

Plans to quarantine international tennis players and support staff in a luxury hotel in Melbourne during the Australian Open have been abandoned after residents threatened legal action against the government.

The Westin Melbourne, located in the city's CBD, was one of several hotels Tennis Australia and the Victorian Government had secured to house players and their entourages for 14 days of quarantine, prior to the grand slam starting on February 8.

But owners of the penthouse apartments inside the Westin said they were not consulted about the plan and some elderly residents were worried about health risks.

Police Minister Lisa Neville said the government has found another hotel.

"We became aware on Sunday that there were some concerns that had been expressed by the residents in the apartments," Neville said.

"We were also concerned this may delay the standing up of the Australian Open so we've gone through a process of securing a new site."

One of the owners, businessman Tony Schiavello, said they had never been consulted about the arrangements.

"On the top level, the 12th and 13th floors, there are many residents over 80 years old," Schiavello said.

Players would be driven to a separate facility to practice for up to five hours each day during the mandatory quarantine period, under strict bubble arrangements revealed by Ten-

nis Australia last month.

Neville said the cancellation of the contract with the Westin had been "mutually agreed" and that no compensation was being sought from residents.

Despite the decision, she said the government was absolutely confident in the infection prevention and control system that had been put in place.

"The residents are completely separate," she said.

Resident David Marriner said the change of plan was a relief.

"The concerns were that we would've found it difficult to get separation, but in saying that, we weren't provided the information that perhaps would've satisfied us in that request," Mr Marriner said.

The government will publicly announce a full list of the contracted hotels to be used by players for quarantine next week.

WANTED

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of the Games and finalizing the event's budget should also be prioritized. In the earlier deal between the PGC and the host island, through the NMSA, the costs of the Mini Games are pegged at \$3 million, down from \$8 million, as the sports program was trimmed from 12 to six.

There is a proposal to add two more events—tennis and weightlifting—to the Mini Games program and that would require additional funding. The Mini Games will be funded through government financial assistance, private sector sponsorships and donations, and fees from participating countries. The Pacific Games Association has 22 members and Minogue has estimated the participation of athletes and officials in the Mini Games at 100 per sport.

Other key areas of concern

With the COVID-19 pandem-



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Pacific Games Council chief executive officer Andrew Minogue addresses some of the concerns of the 2022 Pacific Games Organizing Committee during yesterday's meeting at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

ic still a major problem across the globe, the delegates' health and safety were also discussed at the organizing committee's meeting yesterday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The committee will be working closely with the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., and the Department of Fire and Emer-

gency Medical Services to address this issue.

Another concern raised is the transportation of off-island delegates. With flights limited due to the pandemic, there's a

need to coordinate with airline companies early for the travel arrangements of the Mini Games participants.

As for accommodation, majority of the delegates will

be housed in schools, but there are some who may opt to stay in hotels, so discussions on offering special rates for Mini Games participants were opened.



Luka looks fine, lifts Mavs over Rockets

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Playoffs: Powerhouses, pretenders, and a 7-9 team

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Wanted: Mini Games CEO



By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee had its first meeting yesterday and went down to business quickly, identifying the group's priorities in the next few months to kick into high gear the CNMI's preparations for the 2022 Pacific Mini Games.

On top of the committee's to-do list is the hiring of the Mini Games' chief executive officer, which will oversee the day-to-day preparation for the Commonwealth's hosting of the quadrennial competition. A selection committee has been



formed to fast-track the process of filling up the key position with Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chair Rep. Marco Peter (R-Saipan) on the group along with Oversight Committee head Alex Sablan, Pacific Games Council CEO

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Members and officials of the 2022 Pacific Games Organizing Committee led by Rep. Marco Peter (R-Saipan), third left, listen to Pacific Games Council chief executive officer Andrew Minogue who attended yesterday's meeting at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Andrew Minogue, and Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan.

Minogue attended virtually the organizing committee's first meeting since the group was formed in November last year and concurred with the steps Peter and company must take with the event just a little over 17 months away. The Mini Games is scheduled from June 17 to 25 next year.

To help the CNMI hire a CEO for the Mini Games, the PGC provided the organizing committee a \$20,000 financial assistance.

"Hiring a CEO is very critical in the CNMI's hosting of the Mini Games and we, at the Pacific Games Council, are happy to help you move forward with the preparations for the event," Minogue said.

Besides selecting a CEO for the Mini Games, Minogue and the organizing committee have also agreed that working on a proposal for sponsorships

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Camacho, Santos triumph

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Pee wee Class welcomed several new riders in its first event for 2021, but old-timers Jonoah Santos and Ezekiel Camacho still prevailed in their respective competitions during the Marianas Racing Association Series 6 last Sunday at CowTown Raceway in Marpi.

Camacho ruled the Pee wee Class 1, as he started and ended the five-lap race as frontrunner. Harley Susulin, who finished third in the first two laps, moved up to second after the event, as she pushed harder in the last three laps to bump off Zane Fujihira. Series 3 winner Fujihira dropped to third in the Pee wee Class 1,



which drew the most participants (12) in last weekend's event.

Kimason and Rockson Cabrera, Leighton Palacios, Benthley Koshiro, Tate Manglona, Kasidy Villagomez, Ramon Camacho, and Keoni Rosario were the other riders entered in the Pee wee Class 1.

In the Pee wee Class 2, Santos notched his fifth win and fourth straight after beating seven other riders.

The repeat winner was in control of the race from start to finish to extend his reign in the division. Rylie Manglona and Nevaeh Camacho joined Santos in the Top 3 overall rankings, as the former jumped from fifth to second after making the move in the



JOSEPH CHIN

Jonoah Santos is way ahead of his opponents in the Pee wee Class 2.

last three of the five-lap race. Nevaeh was ranked second in the first two laps, but dropped

a notch in the overall ladder after placing third in the final three laps. Keenon Togawa,



JOSEPH CHIN

Ezekiel Camacho (100) nears a turn and tries to catch up with two riders during the Marianas Racing Association Series 6 last Sunday at the CowTown Raceway in Marpi.

Therese Manglona, Trey Manglona, Brooklynn Susulin, and Skylar Togawa rounded out the finishers in the division.

In the ATV (same class), Nevaeh was the top finisher

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